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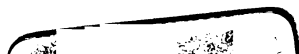
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THE  
LING AND THE BOOK.

BY

ROBERT BROWNING,

M.A.,

HONORARY FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

*IN FOUR VOLUMES.*

VOL. III.



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# THE RING AND THE BOOK.

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## VII.

### POMPILIA.

I AM just seventeen years and five months old,  
And, if I lived one day more, three full weeks ;  
'T is writ so in the church's register,  
Lorenzo in Lucina, all my names  
At length, so many names for one poor child,                   5  
—Francesca Camilla Vittoria Angela  
Pompilia Comparini,—laughable !  
Also 't is writ that I was married there  
Four years ago : and they will add, I hope,  
When they insert my death, a word or two,—                   10

Omitting all about the mode of death,—  
This, in its place, this which one cares to know,  
That I had been a mother of a son  
Exactly two weeks. It will be through grace  
O' the Curate, not through any claim I have ;  
Because the boy was born at, so baptized  
Close to, the Villa, in the proper church :  
A pretty church, I say no word against,  
Yet stranger-like,—while this Lorenzo seems  
My own particular place, I always say.  
I used to wonder, when I stood scarce high  
As the bed here, what the marble lion meant,  
With half his body rushing from the wall,  
Eating the figure of a prostrate man—  
(To the right, it is, of entry by the door)  
An ominous sign to one baptized like me,  
Married, and to be buried there, I hope.  
And they should add, to have my life complete,  
He is a boy and Gaetan by name—  
Gaetano, for a reason,—if the friar  
Don Celestine will ask this grace for me  
Of Curate Ottoboni : he it was

Baptized me : he remembers my whole life  
As I do his grey hair.

All these few things                      35

I know are true,—will you remember them ?  
Because time flies. The surgeon cared for me,  
To count my wounds,—twenty-two dagger-wounds,  
Five deadly, but I do not suffer much—  
Or too much pain,—and am to die to-night.                      40

Oh how good God is that my babe was born,  
—Better than born, baptized and hid away  
Before this happened, safe from being hurt !  
That had been sin God could not well forgive :  
He was too young to smile and save himself.                      45  
When they took, two days after he was born,  
My babe away from me to be baptized  
And hidden awhile, for fear his foe should find,—  
The country-woman, used to nursing babes,  
Said “ Why take on so ? where is the great loss ?                      50  
“ These next three weeks he will but sleep and feed,  
“ Only begin to smile at the month’s end ;

" He would not know you, if you kept him here,  
 " Sooner than that ; so, spend three merry weeks  
 " Snug in the Villa, getting strong and stout, 55  
 " And then I bring him back to be your own,  
 " And both of you may steal to—we know where ! "  
 The month—there wants of it two weeks this day !  
 Still, I half fancied when I heard the knock  
 At the Villa in the dusk, it might prove she— 60  
 Come to say " Since he smiles before the time,  
 " Why should I cheat you out of one good hour ?  
 " Back I have brought him ; speak to him and judge ! "  
 Now I shall never see him ; what is worse,  
 When he grows up and gets to be my age, 65  
 He will seem hardly more than a great boy ;  
 And if he asks " What was my mother like ? "  
 People may answer " Like girls of seventeen "—  
 And how can he but think of this and that,  
 Lucias, Marias, Sofias, who titter or blush 70  
 When he regards them as such boys may do ?  
 Therefore I wish some one will please to say  
 I looked already old though I was young ;  
 Do I not . . say, if you are by to speak . .

rarer twenty? No more like, at least,      75  
 to look arch or redden when boys laugh,  
 the poor Virgin that I used to know  
 street-corner in a lonely niche,—  
 she, that sat upon her knees, broke off,—  
 white glazed clay, you pitied her the more :      80  
 the gay ones, always got my rose.

happy those are who know how to write !  
 could write what their son should read in time,  
 by a whole day to live out like me.  
 name is not a common name,      85  
 "Pompilia," and may help to keep apart  
 the thing I am from what girls are.  
 how far away, how hard to find  
 the thing about me have become,  
 the boy bethink himself and ask !      90  
 or that he ever knew at all,  
 he had—no, never had, I say !  
 the truth,—nor any mother left,  
 the little two weeks that she lived,  
 such memory as might assist :      95

As good too as no family, no name,  
Not even poor old Pietro's name, nor hers,  
Poor kind unwise Violante, since it seems  
They must not be my parents any more.  
That is why something put it in my head 100  
To call the boy "Gaetano"—no old name  
For sorrow's sake ; I looked up to the sky  
And took a new saint to begin anew.  
One who has only been made saint—how long ?  
Twenty-five years : so, carefuller, perhaps, 105  
To guard a namesake than those old saints grow,  
Tired out by this time,—see my own five saints !

On second thoughts, I hope he will regard  
The history of me as what someone dreamed,  
And get to disbelieve it at the last : 110  
Since to myself it dwindles fast to that,  
Sheer dreaming and impossibility,—  
Just in four days too ! All the seventeen years,  
Not once did a suspicion visit me  
How very different a lot is mine 115  
From any other woman's in the world.

The reason must be, 't was by step and step  
It got to grow so terrible and strange :  
These strange woes stole on tiptoe, as it were,  
Into my neighbourhood and privacy, 120  
Sat down where I sat, laid them where I lay ;  
And I was found familiarised with fear,  
When friends broke in, held up a torch and cried  
“ Why, you Pompilia in the cavern thus,  
“ How comes that arm of yours about a wolf? 125  
“ And the soft length,—lies in and out your feet  
“ And laps you round the knee,—a snake it is ! ”  
And so on.

Well, and they are right enough,  
By the torch they hold up now : for first, observe, 130  
I never had a father,—no, nor yet  
A mother : my own boy can say at least  
“ I had a mother whom I kept two weeks ! ”  
Not I, who little used to doubt . . I doubt  
Good Pietro, kind Violante, gave me birth ? 135  
They loved me always as I love my babe  
(—Nearly so, that is—quite so could not be—)



Did for me all I meant to do for him,  
Till one surprising day, three years ago,  
They both declared, at Rome, before some judge      140  
In some court where the people flocked to hear,  
That really I had never been their child,  
Was a mere castaway, the careless crime  
Of an unknown man, the crime and care too much  
Of a woman known too well,—little to these,      145  
Therefore, of whom I was the flesh and blood :  
What then to Pietro and Violante, both  
No more my relatives than you or you ?  
Nothing to them ! You know what they declared.

So with my husband,—just such a surprise,      150  
Such a mistake, in that relationship !  
Everyone says that husbands love their wives,  
Guard them and guide them, give them happiness ;  
'Tis duty, law, pleasure, religion : well,  
You see how much of this comes true in mine !      155  
People indeed would fain have somehow proved  
He was no husband : but he did not hear,  
Or would not wait, and so has killed us all.

Then there is . . only let me name one more !  
There is the friend,—men will not ask about, 160  
But tell untruths of, and give nicknames to,  
And think my lover, most surprise of all !  
Do only hear, it is the priest they mean,  
Giuseppe Caponsacchi : a priest—love,  
And love me ! Well, yet people think he did. 165  
I am married, he has taken priestly vows,  
They know that, and yet go on, say, the same,  
“Yes, how he loves you !” “That was love”—they  
say,  
When anything is answered that they ask :  
Or else “No wonder you love him”—they say. 170  
Then they shake heads, pity much, scarcely blame—  
As if we neither of us lacked excuse,  
And anyhow are punished to the full,  
And downright love atones for everything !  
Nay, I heard read-out in the public court 175  
Before the judge, in presence of my friends,  
Letters ’t was said the priest had sent to me,  
And other letters sent him by myself,  
We being lovers !

Listen what this is like ! 180

When I was a mere child, my mother . . . that's

Violante, you must let me call her so

Nor waste time, trying to unlearn the word, . . .

She brought a neighbour's child of my own age

To play with me of rainy afternoons ; 185

And, since there hung a tapestry on the wall,

We two agreed to find each other out

Among the figures. " Tisbe, that is you,

" With half-moon on your hair-knot, spear in hand,

" Flying, but no wings, only the great scarf 190

" Blown to a bluish rainbow at your back :

" Call off your hound and leave the stag alone ! "

" — And there are you, Pompilia, such green leaves

" Flourishing out of your five finger-ends,

" And all the rest of you so brown and rough : 195

" Why is it you are turned a sort of tree ? "

You know the figures never were ourselves

Though we nicknamed them so. Thus, all my life,—

As well what was, as what, like this, was not,—

Looks old, fantastic and impossible : 200

I touch a fairy thing that fades and fades.

my babe ! I thought, when he was born,  
began for once that would not end,  
into a laugh at me, but stay  
e, eternally quite mine. 205

s,—but yet they bore him off,  
y, lest my husband should lay traps  
him, and by means of him catch me.  
have saved him so, it was well done :  
comes such confusion of what was 210  
ill be,—that late seems long ago,  
ears should bring round, already come,  
withdraws into a dream

o : I fancy him grown great,  
, a tall young man who tutors me, 215  
the others “ Poor imprudent child !  
ou venture out of the safe street ?  
far from help to that lone house ?  
at the whisper and the knock ? ”

when it was New Year's-day, 220  
re the fire and talked of him,  
ld do when he was grown and great.

Violante, Pietro, each had given the arm  
I leant on, to walk by, from couch to chair  
And fireside,—laughed, as I lay safe at last, 225  
“Pompilia’s march from bed to board is made,  
“Pompilia back again and with a babe,  
“Shall one day lend his arm and help her walk !”  
Then we all wished each other more New Years.  
Pietro began to scheme—“Our cause is gained ; 230  
“The law is stronger than a wicked man :  
“Let him henceforth go his way, leave us ours !  
“We will avoid the city, tempt no more  
“The greedy ones by feasting and parade,—  
“Live at the other villa, we know where, 235  
“Still farther off, and we can watch the babe  
“Grow fast in the good air ; and wood is cheap  
“And wine sincere outside the city gate.  
“I still have two or three old friends will grope  
“Their way along the mere half-mile of road, 240  
“With staff and lantern on a moonless night  
“When one needs talk : they ’ll find me, never fear,  
“And I ’ll find them a flask of the old sort yet !”  
Violante said “You chatter like a crow :

---

“ Pompilia tires o’ the tattle, and shall to-bed : 245

“ Do not too much the first day,—somewhat more

“ To-morrow, and, the next, begin the cape

“ And hood and coat ! I have spun wool enough.”

Oh what a happy friendly eve was that !

And, next day, about noon, out Pietro went— 250

He was so happy and would talk so much,

Until Violante pushed and laughed him forth

Sight-seeing in the cold,—“ So much to see

“ I’ the churches ! Swathe your throat three times !”

she cried,

“ And, above all, beware the slippery ways, 255

“ And bring us all the news by supper-time !”

He came back late, laid by cloak, staff and hat,

Powdered so thick with snow it made us laugh,

Rolled a great log upon the ash o’ the hearth,

And bade Violante treat us to a flask, 260

Because he had obeyed her faithfully,

Gone sight-see through the seven, and found no church

To his mind like San Giovanni—“ There ’s the fold,

“ And all the sheep together, big as cats !

“ And such a shepherd, half the size of life,                    265  
“ Starts up and hears the angel ” — when, at the  
door,

A tap : we started up : you know the rest.

Pietro at least had done no harm, I know ;  
Nor even Violante, so much harm as makes  
Such revenge lawful. Certainly she erred—                    270  
Did wrong, how shall I dare say otherwise ?—  
In telling that first falsehood, buying me  
From my poor faulty mother at a price,  
To pass off upon Pietro as his child :  
If one should take my babe, give him a name,                    275  
Say he was not Gaetano and my own,  
But that some other woman made his mouth  
And hands and feet,—how very false were that !  
No good could come of that ; and all harm did.  
Yet if a stranger were to represent                    280  
“ Needs must you either give your babe to me  
“ And let me call him mine for ever more,  
“ Or let your husband get him ”—ah, my God,  
That were a trial I refuse to face !

Well, just so here : it proved wrong but seemed right  
To poor Violante—for there lay, she said, 286  
My poor real dying mother in her rags,  
Who put me from her with the life and all,  
Poverty, pain, shame and disease at once,  
To die the easier by what price I fetched— 290  
Also (I hope) because I should be spared  
Sorrow and sin,—why may not that have helped ?  
My father,—he was no one, any one,—  
The worse, the likelier,—call him,—he who came,  
Was wicked for his pleasure, went his way, 295  
And left no trace to track by ; there remained  
Nothing but me, the unnecessary life,  
To catch up or let fall,—and yet a thing  
She could make happy, be made happy with,  
This poor Violante,—who would frown thereat ? 300

Well, God, you see ! God plants us where we grow.  
It is not that, because a bud is born  
At a wild briar's end, full i' the wild beast's way,  
We ought to pluck and put it out of reach  
On the oak-tree top,—say, “ There the bud belongs ! ”




She thought, moreover, real lies were—lies told      306  
For harm's sake ; whereas this had good at heart,  
Good for my mother, good for me, and good  
For Pietro who was meant to love a babe,  
And needed one to make his life of use,      310  
Receive his house and land when he should die.  
Wrong, wrong and always wrong ! how plainly wrong !  
For see, this fault kept pricking, as faults do,  
All the same at her heart,—this falsehood hatched,  
She could not let it go nor keep it fast.      315  
She told me so,—the first time I was found  
Locked in her arms once more after the pain,  
When the nuns let me leave them and go home,  
And both of us cried all the cares away,—  
This it was set her on to make amends,      320  
This brought about the marriage—simply this !  
Do let me speak for her you blame so much !  
When Paul, my husband's brother, found me out,  
Heard there was wealth for who should marry me,  
So, came and made a speech to ask my hand      325  
For Guido,—she, instead of piercing straight  
Through the pretence to the ignoble truth,

1 she saw God's very finger point,  
ate just the time for planting me,  
ild briar-slip she plucked to love and wear) 330  
where I could strike real root, and grow,  
t to be the thing I called myself :  
ife and husband are one flesh, God says,  
whose parents seemed such and were none,  
in a husband have a husband now, 335  
othing, this time, but was what it seemed,  
ruth and no confusion any more.  
she meant all good to me, all pain  
self,—since how could it be aught but pain,  
e me up, so, from her very breast, 340  
lding flower-tree-branch that, all those years,  
d got used to feel for and find fixed ?  
ant well : has it been so ill ? the main ?  
but fair to ask : one cannot judge  
t has been the ill or well of life, 345  
y that one is dying,—sorrows change  
t altogether sorrow-like ;  
e strangeness but scarce misery,  
is over, and no danger more.

My child is safe ; there seems not so much pain. 350  
It comes, most like, that I am just absolved,  
Purged of the past, the foul in me, washed fair,—  
One cannot both have and not have, you know,—  
Being right now, I am happy and colour things.  
Yes, every body that leaves life sees all 355  
Softened and bettered : so with other sights :  
To me at least was never evening yet  
But seemed far beautifuller than its day,  
For past is past.

There was a fancy came, 360  
When somewhere, in the journey with my friend,  
We stepped into a hovel to get food ;  
And there began a yelp here, a bark there,—  
Misunderstanding creatures that were wroth  
And vexed themselves and us till we retired. 365  
The hovel is life : no matter what dogs bit  
Or cats scratched in the hovel I break from,  
All outside is lone field, moon and such peace—  
Flowing in, filling up as with a sea  
Whereon comes Someone, walks fast on the white, 370



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Designate just the time for planting me,  
(The wild briar-slip she plucked to love and wear) 330  
In soil where I could strike real root, and grow,  
And get to be the thing I called myself :  
For, wife and husband are one flesh, God says,  
And I, whose parents seemed such and were none,  
Should in a husband have a husband now, 335  
Find nothing, this time, but was what it seemed,  
—All truth and no confusion any more.  
I know she meant all good to me, all pain  
To herself,—since how could it be aught but pain,  
To give me up, so, from her very breast, 340  
The wilding flower-tree-branch that, all those years,  
She had got used to feel for and find fixed ?  
She meant well : has it been so ill i' the main ?  
That is but fair to ask : one cannot judge  
Of what has been the ill or well of life, 345  
The day that one is dying,—sorrows change  
Into not altogether sorrow-like ;  
I do see strangeness but scarce misery,  
Now it is over, and no danger more.

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Whereon comes Someone, walks fast on the white, 370

Jesus Christ's self, Don Celestine declares,  
To meet me and calm all things back again.

Beside, up to my marriage, thirteen years  
Were, each day, happy as the day was long :  
This may have made the change too terrible. 375  
I know that when Violante told me first  
The cavalier,—she meant to bring next morn,  
Whom I must also let take, kiss my hand,—  
Would be at San Lorenzo the same eve  
And marry me,—which over, we should go 380  
Home both of us without him as before,  
And, till she bade speak, I must hold my tongue,  
Such being the correct way with girl-brides,  
From whom one word would make a father blush,—  
I know, I say, that when she told me this, 385  
—Well, I no more saw sense in what she said  
Than a lamb does in people clipping wool ;  
Only lay down and let myself be clipped.  
And when next day the cavalier who came  
(Tisbe had told me that the slim young man 390  
With wings at head, and wings at feet, and sword



Threatening a monster, in our tapestry,  
Would eat a girl else,—was a cavalier)  
When he proved Guido Franceschini,—old  
And nothing like so tall as I myself, 395  
Hook-nosed and yellow in a bush of beard,  
Much like a thing I saw on a boy's wrist,  
He called an owl and used for catching birds,—  
And when he took my hand and made a smile—  
Why, the uncomfortableness of it all 400  
Seemed hardly more important in the case  
Than,—when one gives you, say, a coin to spend,—  
Its newness or its oldness ; if the piece  
Weigh properly and buy you what you wish,  
No matter whether you get grime or glare ! 405  
Men take the coin, return you grapes and figs.  
Here, marriage was the coin, a dirty piece  
Would purchase me the praise of those I loved :  
About what else should I concern myself ?

So, hardly knowing what a husband meant, 410  
I supposed this or any man would serve,  
No whit the worse for being so uncouth :

---

For I was ill once and a doctor came  
With a great ugly hat, no plume thereto,  
Black jerkin and black buckles and black sword,      415  
And white sharp beard over the ruff in front,  
And oh so lean, so sour-faced and austere !—  
Who felt my pulse, made me put out my tongue,  
Then oped a phial, dripped a drop or two  
Of a black bitter something,—I was cured !      420  
What mattered the fierce beard or the grim face ?  
It was the physic beautified the man,  
Master Malpichi,—never met his match  
In Rome, they said,—so ugly all the same !

However, I was hurried through a storm,      425  
Next dark eve of December's deadest day—  
How it rained !—through our street and the Lion's-mouth  
And the bit of Corso,—cloaked round, covered close,  
I was like something strange or contraband,—  
Into blank San Lorenzo, up the aisle,      430  
My mother keeping hold of me so tight,  
I fancied we were come to see a corpse  
Before the altar which she pulled me toward.

There we found waiting an unpleasant priest  
Who proved the brother, not our parish friend, 435  
But one with mischief-making mouth and eye,  
Paul, whom I know since to my cost. And then  
I heard the heavy church-door lock out help  
Behind us : for the customary warmth,  
Two tapers shivered on the altar. " Quick— 440  
" Lose no time ! "—cried the priest. And straightway  
down

From . . what's behind the altar where he hid—  
Hawk-nose and yellowness and bush and all,  
Stepped Guido, caught my hand, and there was I  
O' the chancel, and the priest had opened book, 445  
Read here and there, made me say that and this,  
And after, told me I was now a wife,  
Honoured indeed, since Christ thus weds the Church,  
And therefore turned he water into wine,  
To show I should obey my spouse like Christ. 450  
Then the two slipped aside and talked apart,  
And I, silent and scared, got down again  
And joined my mother who was weeping now.  
Nobody seemed to mind us any more,

And both of us on tiptoe found our way 455  
To the door which was unlocked by this, and wide.  
When we were in the street, the rain had stopped,  
All things looked better. At our own house-door,  
Violante whispered "No one syllable  
" To Pietro! Girl-brides never breathe a word!" 460  
" —Well treated to a wetting, draggle-tails!"  
Laughed Pietro as he opened—"Very near  
" You made me brave the gutter's roaring sea  
" To carry off from roost old dove and young,  
" Trussed up in church, the cote, by me, the kite! 465  
" What do these priests mean, praying folk to death  
" On stormy afternoons, with Christmas close  
" To wash our sins off nor require the rain?"  
Violante gave my hand a timely squeeze,  
Madonna saved me from immodest speech, 470  
I kissed him and was quiet, being a bride.

When I saw nothing more, the next three weeks,  
Of Guido—"Nor the Church sees Christ" thought I:  
"Nothing is changed however, wine is wine  
" And water only water in our house. 475

"Nor did I see that ugly doctor since  
"The cure of the illness : just as I was cured,  
"I am married,—neither scarecrow will return."

Three weeks, I chuckled—"How would Giulia stare,  
"And Tecla smile and Tisbe laugh outright, 480  
"Were it not impudent for brides to talk!"—  
Until one morning, as I sat and sang  
At the broidery-frame alone i' the chamber,—loud  
Voices, two, three together, sobbings too,  
And my name, "Guido," "Paolo," flung like stones 485  
From each to the other ! In I ran to see.  
There stood the very Guido and the priest  
With sly face,—formal but nowise afraid,—  
While Pietro seemed all red and angry, scarce  
Able to stutter out his wrath in words ; 490  
And this it was that made my mother sob,  
As he reproached her—"You have murdered us,  
"Me and yourself and this our child beside !"  
Then Guido interposed "Murdered or not,  
"Be it enough your child is now my wife ! 495  
"I claim and come to take her." Paul put in,

“ Consider—kinsman, dare I term you so?—

“ What is the good of your sagacity

“ Except to counsel in a strait like this?

“ I guarantee the parties man and wife 500

“ Whether you like or loathe it, bless or ban.

“ May spilt milk be put back within the bowl—

“ The done thing, undone? You, it is, we look

“ For counsel to, you fittest will advise!

“ Since milk, though spilt and spoilt, does marble good,

“ Better we down on knees and scrub the floor, 506

“ Than sigh, ‘the waste would make a syllabub!’

“ Help us so turn disaster to account,

“ So predispose the groom, he needs shall grace

“ The bride with favour from the very first, 510

“ Not begin marriage an embittered man!”

He smiled,—the game so wholly in his hands!

While fast and faster sobbed Violante—“Ay,

“ All of us murdered, past averting now!

“ O my sin, O my secret!” and such like. 515

Then I began to half surmise the truth;

Something had happened, low, mean, underhand,

False, and my mother was to blame, and I  
To pity, whom all spoke of, none addressed :  
I was the chattel that had caused a crime. 520  
I stood mute,—those who tangled must untie  
The embroilment. Pietro cried “Withdraw, my child !  
“ She is not helpful to the sacrifice  
“ At this stage,—do you want the victim by  
“ While you discuss the value of her blood ? 525  
“ For her sake, I consent to hear you talk :  
“ Go, child, and pray God help the innocent !”

I did go and was praying God, when came  
Violante, with eyes swollen and red enough,  
But movement on her mouth for make-believe 530  
Matters were somehow getting right again.  
She bade me sit down by her side and hear.  
“ You are too young and cannot understand,  
“ Nor did your father understand at first.  
“ I wished to benefit all three of us, 535  
“ And when he failed to take my meaning,—why,  
“ I tried to have my way at unaware—  
“ Obtained him the advantage he refused.

- 
- “ As if I put before him wholesome food  
“ Instead of broken victual,—he finds change 540  
“ I’ the viands, never cares to reason why,  
“ But falls to blaming me, would fling the plate  
“ From window, scandalize the neighbourhood,  
“ Even while he smacks his lips,—men’s way, my child !  
“ But either you have prayed him unperverse 545  
“ Or I have talked him back into his wits:  
“ And Paolo was a help in time of need,—  
“ Guido, not much—my child, the way of men !  
“ A priest is more a woman than a man,  
“ And Paul did wonders to persuade. In short, 550  
“ Yes, he was wrong, your father sees and says ;  
“ My scheme was worth attempting : and bears fruit,  
“ Gives you a husband and a noble name,  
“ A palace and no end of pleasant things.  
“ What do you care about a handsome youth ? 555  
“ They are so volatile, and tease their wives !  
“ This is the kind of man to keep the house.  
“ We lose no daughter,—gain a son, that’s all :  
“ For ’tis arranged we never separate,  
“ Nor miss, in our grey time of life, the tints 560



“ Of you that colour eve to match with morn.  
“ In good or ill, we share and share alike,  
“ And cast our lots into a common lap,  
“ And all three die together as we lived !  
“ Only, at Arezzo,—that ’s a Tuscan town, 565  
“ Not so large as this noisy Rome, no doubt,  
“ But older far and finer much, say folks,—  
“ In a great palace where you will be queen,  
“ Know the Archbishop and the Governor,  
“ And we see homage done you ere we die. 570  
“ Therefore, be good and pardon !”—“ Pardon what ?  
“ You know things, I am very ignorant :  
“ All is right if you only will not cry !”

And so an end ! Because a blank begins  
From when, at the word, she kissed me hard and hot,  
And took me back to where my father leaned 575  
Opposite Guido—who stood eyeing him,  
As eyes the butcher the cast panting ox  
That feels his fate is come, nor struggles more,—  
While Paul looked archly on, pricked brow at whites 580  
With the pen-point as to punish triumph there,—

And said "Count Guido, take your lawful wife  
"Until death part you!"

All since is one blank,

Over and ended; a terrific dream. 585  
It is the good of dreams—so soon they go!  
Wake in a horror of heart-beats, you may—  
Cry, "The dread thing will never from my thoughts!"  
Still, a few daylight doses of plain life,  
Cock-crow and sparrow-chirp, or bleat and bell 590  
Of goats that trot by, tinkling, to be milked;  
And when you rub your eyes awake and wide,  
Where is the harm o' the horror? Gone! So here.  
I know I wake,—but from what? Blank, I say!  
This is the note of evil: for good lasts. 595  
Even when Don Celestine bade "Search and find!"  
"For your soul's sake, remember what is past,  
"The better to forgive it,"—all in vain!  
What was fast getting indistinct before,  
Vanished outright. By special grace perhaps, 600  
Between that first calm and this last, four years  
Vanish,—one quarter of my life, you know.

I am held up, amid the nothingness,  
By one or two truths only—thence I hang,  
And there I live,—the rest is death or dream,                   605  
All but those points of my support. I think  
Of what I saw at Rome once in the Square  
O' the Spaniards, opposite the Spanish House :  
There was a foreigner had trained a goat,  
A shuddering white woman of a beast,                   610  
To climb up, stand straight on a pile of sticks  
Put close, which gave the creature room enough :  
When she was settled there he, one by one,  
Took away all the sticks, left just the four  
Whereon the little hoofs did really rest,                   615  
There she kept firm, all underneath was air.  
So, what I hold by, are my prayer to God,  
My hope, that came in answer to the prayer,  
Some hand would interpose and save me—hand  
Which proved to be my friend's hand : and,—best bliss,—  
That fancy which began so faint at first,                   621  
That thrill of dawn's suffusion through my dark,  
Which I perceive was promise of my child,  
The light his unborn face sent long before,—

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God's way of breaking the good news to flesh. 625  
That is all left now of those four bad years.  
Don Celestine urged "But remember more !  
" Other men's faults may help me find your own.  
" I need the cruelty exposed, explained,  
" Or how can I advise you to forgive ?" 630  
He thought I could not properly forgive  
Unless I ceased forgetting,—which is true :  
For, bringing back reluctantly to mind  
My husband's treatment of me,—by a light  
That 's later than my life-time, I review 635  
And comprehend much and imagine more,  
And have but little to forgive at last.  
For now,—be fair and say,—is it not true  
He was ill-used and cheated of his hope  
To get enriched by marriage ? Marriage gave 640  
Me and no money, broke the compact so :  
He had a right to ask me on those terms,  
As Pietro and Violante to declare  
They would not give me : so the bargain stood :  
They broke it, and he felt himself aggrieved, 645  
Became unkind with me to punish them.

They said 't was he began deception first,  
Nor, in one point whereto he pledged himself,  
Kept promise : what of that, suppose it were ?  
Echoes die off, scarcely reverberate 650  
For ever,—why should ill keep echoing ill,  
And never let our ears have done with noise ?  
Then my poor parents took the violent way  
To thwart him,—he must needs retaliate,—wrong,  
Wrong, and all wrong,—better say, all blind ! 655  
As I myself was, that is sure, who else  
Had understood the mystery : for his wife  
Was bound in some sort to help somehow there.  
It seems as if I might have interposed,  
Blunted the edge of their resentment so, 660  
Since he vexed me because they first vexed him ;  
“ I will entreat them to desist, submit,  
“ Give him the money and be poor in peace,—  
“ Certainly not go tell the world : perhaps  
“ He will grow quiet with his gains.” 665

Yes, say

Something to this effect and you do well !

But then you have to see first : I was blind.  
That is the fruit of all such wormy ways,  
The indirect, the unapproved of God : 670  
You cannot find their author's end and aim,  
Not even to substitute your good for bad,  
Your open for the irregular ; you stand  
Stupefied, profitless, as cow or sheep  
That miss a man's mind ; anger him just twice 675  
By trial at repairing the first fault.  
Thus, when he blamed me, " You are a coquette,  
' A lure-owl posturing to attract birds,  
' You look love-lures at theatre and church,  
' In walk, at window !"—that, I knew, was false : 680  
But why he charged me falsely, whither sought  
To drive me by such charge,—how could I know ?  
So, unaware, I only made things worse.  
I tried to soothe him by abjuring walk,  
Window, church, theatre, for good and all, 685  
As if he had been in earnest : that, you know,  
Was nothing like the object of his charge.  
Yes, when I got my maid to supplicate  
The priest, whose name she read when she would read

Those feigned false letters I was forced to hear      690  
Though I could read no word of,—he should cease  
Writing,—nay, if he minded prayer of mine,  
Cease from so much as even pass the street  
Whereon our house looked,—in my ignorance  
I was just thwarting Guido's true intent ;      695  
Which was, to bring about a wicked change  
Of sport to earnest, tempt a thoughtless man  
To write indeed, and pass the house, and more,  
Till both of us were taken in a crime.  
He ought not to have wished me thus act lies,      700  
Simulate folly,—but,—wrong or right, the wish,—  
I failed to apprehend its drift. How plain  
It follows,—if I fell into such fault,  
He also may have overreached the mark,  
Made mistake, by perversity of brain,      705  
In the whole sad strange plot, this same intrigue  
To make me and my friend unself ourselves,  
Be other man and woman than we were !  
Think it out, you who have the time ! for me,—  
I cannot say less ; more I will not say.      710  
Leave it to God to cover and undo !

Only, my dulness should not prove too much !  
—Not prove that in a certain other point  
Wherein my husband blamed me,—and you blame,  
If I interpret smiles and shakes of head,— 715  
I was dull too. Oh, if I dared but speak !  
Must I speak ? I am blamed that I forwent  
A way to make my husband's favour come.  
That is true : I was firm, withstood, refused . . .  
—Women as you are, how can I find the words ? 720

I felt there was just one thing Guido claimed  
I had no right to give nor he to take ;  
We being in estrangement, soul from soul :  
Till, when I sought help, the Archbishop smiled,  
Inquiring into privacies of life, 725  
—Said I was blameable—(he stands for God)  
Nowise entitled to exemption there.  
Then I obeyed,—as surely had obeyed  
Were the injunction “ Since your husband bids,  
“ Swallow the burning coal he proffers you ! ” 730  
But I did wrong, and he gave wrong advice  
Though he were thrice Archbishop,—that, I know !—



Now I have got to die and see things clear.  
Remember I was barely twelve years old—  
A child at marriage : I was let alone 735  
For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life still  
Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found  
First . . but I need not think of that again—  
Over and ended ! Try and take the sense  
Of what I signify, if it must be so. 740  
After the first, my husband, for hate's sake,  
Said one eve, when the simpler cruelty  
Seemed somewhat dull at edge and fit to bear,  
“ We have been man and wife six months almost :  
“ How long is this your comedy to last ? 745  
“ Go this night to my chamber, not your own ! ”  
At which word, I did rush—most true the charge—  
And gain the Archbishop's house—he stands for God—  
And fall upon my knees and clasp his feet,  
Praying him hinder what my estranged soul 750  
Refused to bear, though patient of the rest :  
“ Place me within a convent,” I implored—  
“ Let me henceforward lead the virgin life  
“ You praise in Her you bid me imitate ! ”

What did he answer? "Folly of ignorance!" 755  
"Know, daughter, circumstances make or mar  
"Virginitv,—'t is virtue or 't is vice.  
"That which was glory in the Mother of God  
"Had been, for instance, damnable in Eve  
"Created to be mother of mankind. 760  
"Had Eve, in answer to her Maker's speech  
" 'Be fruitful, multiply, replenish earth'—  
"Pouted 'But I choose rather to remain  
" 'Single'—why, she had spared herself forthwith  
"Further probation by the apple and snake, 765  
"Been pushed straight out of Paradise! For see—  
"If motherhood be qualified impure,  
"I catch you making God command Eve sin!  
"—A blasphemy so like these Molinists',  
"I must suspect you dip into their books." 770  
Then he pursued "'T was in your covenant!"

No! There my husband never used deceit.  
He never did by speech nor act imply  
"Because of our souls' yearning that we meet  
"And mix in soul through flesh, which yours and mine

---

“ Wear and impress, and make their visible selves, 776

“ —All which means, for the love of you and me,

“ Let us become one flesh, being one soul ! ”

He only stipulated for the wealth ;

Honest so far. But when he spoke as plain— 780

Dreadfully honest also—“ Since our souls

“ Stand each from each, a whole world’s width between,

“ Give me the fleshy vesture I can reach

“ And rend and leave just fit for hell to burn ! ”—

Why, in God’s name, for Guido’s soul’s own sake 785

Imperilled by polluting mine,—I say,

I did resist ; would I had overcome !

My heart died out at the Archbishop’s smile ;

—It seemed so stale and worn a way o’ the world, 789

As though ’t were nature frowning—“ Here is Spring,

“ The sun shines as he shone at Adam’s fall,

“ The earth requires that warmth reach everywhere :

“ What, must your patch of snow be saved forsooth

“ Because you rather fancy snow than flowers ? ”

Something in this style he began with me. 795

Last he said, savagely for a good man,

- “ This explains why you call your husband harsh,  
“ Harsh to you, harsh to whom you love. God’s Bread !  
“ The poor Count has to manage a mere child  
“ Whose parents leave untaught the simplest things 800  
“ Their duty was and privilege to teach,—  
“ Goodwives’ instruction, gossips’ lore : they laugh  
“ And leave the Count the task,—or leave it me ! ”  
Then I resolved to tell a frightful thing.  
“ I am not ignorant,—know what I say, 805  
“ Declaring this is sought for hate, not love.  
“ Sir, you may hear things like almighty God.  
“ I tell you that my housemate, yes—the priest  
“ My husband’s brother, Canon Girolamo—  
“ Has taught me what depraved and misnamed love 810  
“ Means, and what outward signs denote the sin,  
“ For he solicits me and says he loves,  
“ The idle young priest with nought else to do.  
“ My husband sees this, knows this, and lets be.  
“ Is it your counsel I bear this beside ? ” 815  
“ —More scandal, and against a priest this time !  
“ What, ’t is the Canon now ? ”—less snappishly—  
“ Rise up, my child, for such a child you are,

- " The rod were too advanced a punishment !  
" Let 's try the honeyed cake. A parable ! 820  
" ' Without a parable spake He not to them.' "  
" There was a ripe round long black toothsome fruit,  
" Even a flower-fig, the prime boast of May :  
" And, to the tree, said . . either the spirit o' the fig,  
" Or, if we bring in men, the gardener, 825  
" Archbishop of the orchard—had I time  
" To try o' the two which fits in best : indeed  
" It might be the Creator's self, but then  
" The tree should bear an apple, I suppose,—  
" Well, anyhow, one with authority said 830  
" ' Ripe fig, burst skin, regale the fig-pecker—  
" ' The bird whereof thou art a perquisite ! '  
" ' Nay,' with a flounce, replied the restif fig,  
" ' I much prefer to keep my pulp myself :  
" ' He may go breakfastless and dinnerless, 835  
" ' Supperless of one crimson seed, for me ! '  
" So, back she flopped into her bunch of leaves.  
" He flew off, left her,—did the natural lord,—  
" And lo, three hundred thousand bees and wasps  
" Found her out, feasted on her to the shuck : 840

“ Such gain the fig’s that gave its bird no bite !  
“ The moral,—fools elude their proper lot,  
“ Tempt other fools, get ruined all alike.  
“ Therefore go home, embrace your husband quick !  
“ Which if his Canon brother chance to see,               845  
“ He will the sooner back to book again.”

So, home I did go ; so, the worst befell :  
So, I had proof the Archbishop was just man,  
And hardly that, and certainly no more.  
For, miserable consequence to me,               850  
My husband’s hatred waxed nor waned at all,  
His brother’s boldness grew effrontery soon,  
And my last stay and comfort in myself  
Was forced from me : henceforth I looked to God  
Only, nor cared my desecrated soul               855  
Should have fair walls, gay windows for the world.  
God’s glimmer, that came through the ruin-top,  
Was witness why all lights were quenched inside :  
Henceforth I asked God counsel, not mankind.  
  
So, when I made the effort, saved myself,               860

They said—"No care to save appearance here !  
"How cynic,—when, how wanton, were enough !"  
—Adding, it all came of my mother's life—  
My own real mother, whom I never knew,  
Who did wrong (if she needs must have done wrong) 865  
Through being all her life, not my four years,  
At mercy of the hateful,—every beast  
O' the field was wont to break that fountain-fence,  
Trample the silver into mud so murk  
Heaven could not find itself reflected there,— 870  
Now they cry "Out on her, who, plashy pool,  
"Bequeathed turbidity and bitterness  
"To the daughter-stream where Guido dipt and drank !"

Well, since she had to bear this brand—let me !  
The rather do I understand her now,— 875  
From my experience of what hate calls love,—  
Much love might be in what their love called hate.  
If she sold . . what they call, sold . . me her child—  
I shall believe she hoped in her poor heart  
That I at least might try be good and pure, 880  
Begin to live untempted, not go doomed

one with ere once found in fault, as she.  
d, my mother, it all came to this ?  
ould I trust those that speak ill of you,  
I mistrust who speaks even well of them ? 885  
since all bound to do me good, did harm,  
ot you, seeming as you harmed me most,  
meant to do most good—and feed your child  
bramble-bush, whom not one orchard-tree  
ew-back bough from, nor let one fruit fall ? 890  
: was for you sacrificed your babe ?  
l just this, giving your heart's hope away  
ight give mine, loving it as you,  
but that never could be asked of me !

enough ! I have my support again, 895  
the knowledge that my babe was, is,  
e mine only. Him, by death, I give  
nt to God, without a further care,—  
t to any parent in the world,—  
e safe : why is it we repine ? 900  
guardianship were safer could we choose ?  
nan plans and projects come to nought,



My life, and what I know of other lives,  
Prove that : no plan nor project ! God shall care !

And now you are not tired ? How patient then      905  
All of you,—Oh yes, patient this long while  
Listening, and understanding, I am sure !  
Four days ago, when I was sound and well  
And like to live, no one would understand.  
People were kind, but smiled “ And what of him,      910  
“ Your friend, whose tonsure, the rich dark-brown hides ?  
“ There, there !—your lover, do we dream he was ?  
“ A priest too—never were such naughtiness !  
“ Still, he thinks many a long think, never fear,  
“ After the shy pale lady,—lay so light      915  
“ For a moment in his arms, the lucky one ! ”  
And so on : wherefore should I blame you much ?  
So we are made, such difference in minds,  
Such difference too in eyes that see the minds !  
That man, you misinterpret and misprise—      920  
The glory of his nature, I had thought,  
Shot itself out in white light, blazed the truth  
Through every atom of his act with me :

Yet where I point you, through the chrystal shrine,  
Purity in quintessence, one dew-drop, 925  
You all descry a spider in the midst.

One says, "The head of it is plain to see,"  
And one, "They are the feet by which I judge,"  
All say, "Those films were spun by nothing else."

Then, I must lay my babe away with God, 930  
Nor think of him again, for gratitude.

Yes, my last breath shall wholly spend itself  
In one attempt more to disperse the stain,  
The mist from other breath fond mouths have made,  
About a lustrous and pellucid soul : 935

So that, when I am gone but sorrow stays,  
And people need assurance in their doubt  
If God yet have a servant, man a friend,  
The weak a saviour and the vile a foe,—  
Let him be present, by the name invoked, 940  
Giuseppe-Maria Caponsacchi!

There,  
Strength comes already with the utterance !

I will remember once more for his sake  
The sorrow : for he lives and is belied. 945  
Could he be here, how he would speak for me !

I had been miserable three drear years  
In that dread palace and lay passive now,  
When I first learned there could be such a man.  
Thus it fell : I was at a public play, 950  
In the last days of Carnival last March,  
Brought there I knew not why, but now know well.  
My husband put me where I sat, in front ;  
Then crouched down, breathed cold through me from  
behind,  
Stationed i' the shadow,—none in front could see,— 955  
I, it was, faced the stranger-throng beneath,  
The crowd with upturned faces, eyes one stare,  
Voices one buzz. I looked but to the stage,  
Whereon two lovers sang and interchanged  
“ True life is only love, love only bliss : 960  
“ I love thee—thee I love ! ” then they embraced.  
I looked thence to the ceiling and the walls,—  
Over the crowd, those voices and those eyes,—

My thoughts went through the roof and out, to Rome  
On wings of music, waft of measured words,— 965  
Set me down there, a happy child again,  
Sure that to-morrow would be festa-day,  
Hearing my parents praise past festas more,  
And seeing they were old if I was young,  
Yet wondering why they still would end discourse 970  
With “ We must soon go, you abide your time,  
“ And,—might we haply see the proper friend  
“ Throw his arm over you and make you safe ! ”

Sudden I saw him ; into my lap there fell  
A foolish twist of comfits, broke my dream 975  
And brought me from the air and laid me low,  
As ruined as the soaring bee that ’s reached  
(So Pietro told me at the Villa once)  
By the dust-handful. There the comfits lay :  
I looked to see who flung them, and I faced 980  
This Caponsacchi, looking up in turn.  
Ere I could reason out why, I felt sure,  
Whoever flung them, his was not the hand,—  
Up rose the round face and good-natured grin

Of him who, in effect, had played the prank, 985  
From covert close beside the earnest face,—  
Fat waggish Conti, friend of all the world.  
He was my husband's cousin, privileged  
To throw the thing : the other, silent, grave,  
Solemn almost, saw me, as I saw him. 990

There is a psalm Don Celestine recites,  
“ Had I a dove's wings, how I fain would flee ! ”  
The psalm runs not “ I hope, I pray for wings,”—  
Not “ If wings fall from heaven, I fix them fast,”—  
Simply “ How good it were to fly and rest, 995  
“ Have hope now, and one day expect content !  
“ How well to do what I shall never do ! ”  
So I said “ Had there been a man like that,  
“ To lift me with his strength out of all strife  
“ Into the calm, how I could fly and rest ! 1000  
“ I have a keeper in the garden here  
“ Whose sole employment is to strike me low  
“ If ever I, for solace, seek the sun.  
“ Life means with me successful feigning death,  
“ Lying stone-like, eluding notice so, 1005

“ Forgoing here the turf and there the sky.

“ Suppose that man had been instead of this ! ”

Presently Conti laughed into my ear,

—Had tripped up to the raised place where I sat—

“ Cousin, I flung them brutishly and hard ! 1010

“ Because you must be hurt, to look austere

“ As Caponsacchi yonder, my tall friend

“ A-gazing now. Ah, Guido, you so close ?

“ Keep on your knees, do ! Beg her to forgive !

“ My cornet battered like a cannon-ball. 1015

“ Good bye, I ’m gone ! ”—nor waited the reply.

That night at supper, out my husband broke,

“ Why was that throwing, that buffoonery ?

“ Do you think I am your dupe ? What man would dare

“ Throw comfits in a stranger lady’s lap ? 1020

“ ’Twas knowledge of you bred such insolence

“ In Caponsacchi ; he dared shoot the bolt,

“ Using that Conti for his stalking-horse.

“ How could you see him this once and no more,

“ When he is always haunting hereabout 1025

“ At the street-corner or the palace-side,  
“ Publishing my shame and your impudence ?  
“ You are a wanton,—I a dupe, you think ?  
“ O Christ, what hinders that I kill her quick ? ”  
Whereat he drew his sword and feigned a thrust. 1030

All this, now,—being not so strange to me,  
Used to such misconception day by day  
And broken-in to bear,—I bore, this time,  
More quietly than woman should perhaps ;  
Repeated the mere truth and held my tongue. 1035

Then he said, “ Since you play the ignorant,  
“ I shall instruct you. This amour,—commenced  
“ Or finished or midway in act, all ’s one,—  
“ ’Tis the town-talk ; so my revenge shall be.  
“ Does he presume because he is a priest ? 1040  
“ I warn him that the sword I wear shall pink  
“ His lily-scented cassock through and through,  
“ Next time I catch him underneath your eaves ! ”

But he had threatened with the sword so oft

And, after all, not kept his promise. All 1045  
I said was, " Let God save the innocent !  
" Moreover, death is far from a bad fate.  
" I shall go pray for you and me, not him ;  
" And then I look to sleep, come death or, worse,  
" Life." So, I slept. 1050

There may have elapsed a week,  
When Margherita,—called my waiting-maid,  
Whom it is said my husband found too fair—  
Who stood and heard the charge and the reply,  
Who never once would let the matter rest 1055  
From that night forward, but rang changes still  
On this the thrust and that the shame, and how  
Good cause for jealousy cures jealous fools,  
And what a paragon was this same priest  
She talked about until I stopped my ears,— 1060  
She said, " A week is gone ; you comb your hair,  
" Then go mope in a corner, cheek on palm,  
" Till night comes round again,—so, waste a week  
" As if your husband menaced you in sport.  
" Have not I some acquaintance with his tricks? 1065



- “ Oh no, he did not stab the serving-man  
“ Who made and sang the rhymes about me once !  
“ For why ? They sent him to the wars next day.  
“ Nor poisoned he the foreigner, my friend,  
“ Who wagered on the whiteness of my breast,— 1070  
“ The swarth skins of our city in dispute :  
“ For, though he paid me proper compliment,  
“ The Count well knew he was besotted with  
“ Somebody else, a skin as black as ink,  
“ (As all the town knew save my foreigner) 1075  
“ He found and wedded presently,—‘ Why need  
“ ‘ Better revenge ? ’—the Count asked. But what ’s here ?  
“ A priest, that does not fight, and cannot wed,  
“ Yet must be dealt with ! If the Count took fire  
“ For the poor pastime of a minute,—me— 1080  
“ What were the conflagration for yourself,  
“ Countess and lady-wife and all the rest ?  
“ The priest will perish ; you will grieve too late :  
“ So shall the city-ladies’ handsomest  
“ Frankest and liberal’est gentleman 1085  
“ Die for you, to appease a scurvy dog  
“ Hanging ’s too good for. Is there no escape ?

" Were it not simple Christian charity  
" To warn the priest be on his guard,—save him  
" Assured death, save yourself from causing it? 1090  
" I meet him in the street. Give me a glove,  
" A ring to show for token ! Mum's the word !"

I answered, " If you were, as styled, my maid,  
" I would command you : as you are, you say,  
" My husband's intimate,—assist his wife 1095  
" Who can do nothing but entreat ' Be still !'  
" Even if you speak truth and a crime is planned,  
" Leave help to God as I am forced to do !  
" There is no other course, or we should craze,  
" Seeing such evil with no human cure. 1100  
" Reflect that God, who makes the storm desist,  
" Can make an angry violent heart subside.  
" Why should we venture teach Him governance?  
" Never address me on this subject more !"

Next night she said, " But I went, all the same, 1105  
" —Ay, saw your Caponsacchi in his house,  
" And come back stuffed with news I must outpour.

" I told him, ' Sir, my mistress is a stone :  
" ' Why should you harm her for no good you get ?  
" ' For you do harm her—prowl about our place 1110  
" ' With the Count never distant half the street,  
" ' Lurking at every corner, would you look !  
" ' 'Tis certain she has witched you with a spell.  
" ' Are there not other beauties at your beck ?  
" ' We all know, Donna This and Monna That 1115  
" ' Die for a glance of yours, yet here you gaze !  
" ' Go make them grateful, leave the stone its cold !'  
" And he—oh, he turned first white and then red,  
" And then—' To her behest I bow myself,  
" ' Whom I love with my body and my soul : 1120  
" ' Only, a word i' the bowing ! See, I write  
" ' One little word, no harm to see or hear !  
" ' Then, fear no further !' This is what he wrote.  
" I know you cannot read,—therefore, let me !  
" ' *My idol !*' " . . . 1125

But I took it from her hand  
And tore it into shreds. " Why join the rest  
" Who harm me ? Have I ever done you wrong ?

' People have told me 't is you wrong myself :  
' Let it suffice I either feel no wrong 1130  
' Or else forgive it,—yet you turn my foe !  
' The others hunt me and you throw a noose !”

She muttered, “ Have your wilful way !” I slept.

Whereupon . . no, I leave my husband out !  
It is not to do him more hurt, I speak. 1135  
Let it suffice, when misery was most,  
One day, I swooned and got a respite so.  
She stooped as I was slowly coming to,  
This Margherita, ever on my trace,  
And whispered—“ Caponsacchi !” 1140

If I drowned,

But woke afloat i' the wave with upturned eyes,  
And found their first sight was a star ! I turned—  
For the first time, I let her have her will,  
Heard passively,—“ The imposthume at such head, 1145  
“ One touch, one lancet-puncture would relieve,—  
“ And still no glance the good physician's way

- “ Who rids you of the torment in a trice !  
“ Still he writes letters you refuse to hear.  
“ He may prevent your husband, kill himself, 1150  
“ So desperate and all fordone is he !  
“ Just hear the pretty verse he made to-day !  
“ A sonnet from Mirtillo. ‘ *Peerless fair . . .* ’  
“ All poetry is difficult to read,  
“—The sense of it is, anyhow, he seeks 1155  
“ Leave to contrive you an escape from hell,  
“ And for that purpose asks an interview.  
“ I can write, I can grant it in your name,  
“ Or, what is better, lead you to his house.  
“ Your husband dashes you against the stones ; 1160  
“ This man would place each fragment in a shrine :  
“ You hate him, love your husband ! ”

I returned,

- “ It is not true I love my husband,—no,  
“ Nor hate this man. I listen while you speak, 1165  
“—Assured that what you say is false, the same :  
“ Much as when once, to me a little child,  
“ A rough gaunt man in rags, with eyes on fire,

- “ A crowd of boys and idlers at his heels,  
“ Rushed as I crossed the Square, and held my head  
“ In his two hands, ‘Here’s she will let me speak ! 1171  
“ ‘ You little girl, whose eyes do good to mine,  
“ ‘ I am the Pope, am Sextus, now the Sixth ;  
“ ‘ And that Twelfth Innocent, proclaimed to-day,  
“ ‘ Is Lucifer disguised in human flesh ! 1175  
“ ‘ The angels, met in conclave, crowned me ! ’—thus  
“ He gibbered and I listened ; but I knew  
“ All was delusion, ere folks interposed  
“ ‘ Unfasten him, the maniac ! ’ Thus I know  
“ “ All your report of Caponsacchi false, 1180  
“ Folly or dreaming ; I have seen so much  
“ By that adventure at the spectacle,  
“ The face I fronted that one first, last time :  
“ He would belie it by such words and thoughts.  
“ Therefore while you profess to show him me, 1185  
“ I ever see his own face. . Get you gone ! ”
- “ —That will I, nor once open mouth again,—  
“ No, by Saint Joseph and the Holy Ghost !  
“ On your head be the damage, so adieu ! ”

And so more days, more deeds I must forget,                    1190  
Till . . what a strange thing now is to declare !  
Since I say anything, say all if true !  
And how my life seems lengthened as to serve !  
It may be idle or inopportune,  
But, true ?—why, what was all I said but truth,                    1195  
Even when I found that such as are untrue  
Could only take the truth in through a lie ?  
Now—I am speaking truth to the Truth's self :  
God will lend credit to my words this time.

It had got half through April. I arose                                1200  
One vivid daybreak,—who had gone to bed  
In the old way my wont those last three years,  
Careless until, the cup drained, I should die.  
The last sound in my ear, the over-night,  
Had been a something let drop on the sly                                1205  
In prattle by Margherita, “ Soon enough  
“ Gaieties end, now Easter's past : a week,  
“ And the Archbishop gets him back to Rome,—  
“ Everyone leaves the town for Rome, this Spring,—  
“ Even Caponsacchi, out of heart and hope,                                1210

igns himself and follows with the flock."  
d this drop and drop like rain outside  
dling through the darkness while she spoke :  
l I heard with like indifference,  
Michael's pair of wings will arrive first 1215  
come to introduce the company,  
bear him from our picture where he fights  
n,—expect to have that dragon loose  
never a defender !"—my sole thought  
still, as night came, " Done, another day ! 1220  
v good to sleep and so get nearer death !"—  
what, first thing at daybreak, pierced the sleep  
t summons to me ? Up I sprang alive,  
in me, light without me, everywhere  
e ! A broad yellow sun-beam was let fall 1225  
heaven to earth,—a sudden drawbridge lay,  
which marched a myriad merry motes,  
ng the flies that crossed them and recrossed  
d dance, companions new-born too.  
e house-eaves, a dripping shag of weed 1230  
diamonds on each dull grey lattice-square,  
t one, then another bird leapt by,



And light was off, and lo was back again,  
Always with one voice,—where are two such joys?—  
The blessed building-sparrow! I stepped forth, 1235  
Stood on the terrace,—o'er the roofs, such sky!  
My heart sang, "I too am to go away,  
"I too have something I must care about,  
"Carry away with me to Rome, to Rome!  
"The bird brings hither sticks and hairs and wool, 1240  
"And nowhere else i' the world; what fly breaks rank,  
"Falls out of the procession that befits,  
"From window here to window there, with all  
"The world to choose,—so well he knows his course?  
"I have my purpose and my motive too, 1245  
"My march to Rome, like any bird or fly!  
"Had I been dead! How right to be alive!  
"Last night I almost prayed for leave to die,  
"Wished Guido all his pleasure with the sword  
"Or the poison,—poison, sword, was but a trick, 1250  
"Harmless, may God forgive him the poor jest!  
"My life is charmed, will last till I reach Rome!  
"Yesterday, but for the sin,—ah, nameless be  
"The deed I could have dared against myself!

“ Now—see if I will touch an unripe fruit, 1255  
“ And risk the health I want to have and use !  
“ Not to live, now, would be the wickedness,—  
“ For life means to make haste and go to Rome  
“ And leave Arezzo, leave all woes at once !”

Now, understand here, by no means mistake ! 1260  
Long ago had I tried to leave that house  
When it seemed such procedure would stop sin ;  
And still failed more the more I tried—at first  
The Archbishop, as I told you,—next, our lord  
The Governor,—indeed I found my way, 1265  
I went to the great palace where he rules,  
Though I knew well 't was he who,—when I gave  
A jewel or two, themselves had given me,  
Back to my parents,—since they wanted bread,  
They who had never let me want a nosegay,—he 1270  
Spoke of the jail for felons, if they kept  
What was first theirs, then mine, so doubly theirs,  
Though all the while my husband's most of all !  
I knew well who had spoke the word wrought this :  
Yet, being in extremity, I fled 1275

To the Governor, as I say,—scarce opened lip  
When—the cold cruel snicker close behind—  
Guido was on my trace, already there,  
Exchanging nod and wink for shrug and smile,  
And I—pushed back to him and, for my pains, 1280  
Paid with . . . but why remember what is past ?  
I sought out a poor friar the people call  
The Roman, and confessed my sin which came  
Of their sin,—that fact could not be repressed,—  
The frightfulness of my despair in God : 1285  
And, feeling, through the grate, his horror shake,  
Implored him, “ Write for me who cannot write,  
“ Apprise my parents, make them rescue me !  
“ You bid me be courageous and trust God :  
“ Do you in turn dare somewhat, trust and write 1290  
“ ‘ Dear friends, who used to be my parents once,  
“ ‘ And now declare you have no part in me,  
“ ‘ This is some riddle I want wit to solve,  
“ ‘ Since you must love me with no difference.  
“ ‘ Even suppose you altered,—there ’s your hate, 1295  
“ ‘ To ask for : hate of you two dearest ones  
“ ‘ I shall find liker love than love found here,

“ ‘ If husbands love their wives. Take me away  
“ ‘ And hate me as you do the gnats and fleas,  
“ ‘ Even the scorpions ! How I shall rejoice ! ’ 1300  
“ Write that and save me ! ” And he promised—wrote  
Or did not write ; things never changed at all :  
He was not like the Augustinian here !  
Last, in a desperation I appealed  
To friends, whoever wished me better days, 1305  
To Guillichini, that ’s of kin,—“ What, I—  
“ Travel to Rome with you ? A flying gout  
“ Bids me deny my heart and mind my leg ! ”  
Then I tried Conti, used to brave—laugh back  
The louring thunder when his cousin scowled 1310  
At me protected by his presence : “ You—  
“ Who well know what you cannot save me from,—  
“ Carry me off ! What frightens you, a priest ? ”  
He shook his head, looked grave—“ Above my strength !  
“ Guido has claws that scratch, shows feline teeth ; 1315  
“ A formidabler foe than I dare fret :  
“ Give me a dog to deal with, twice the size !  
“ Of course I am a priest and Canon too,  
“ But . . by the bye . . though both, not quite so bold,

“ As he, my fellow-Canon, brother-priest, 1320  
“ The personage in such ill odour here  
“ Because of the reports—pure birth o’ the brain—  
“ Our Caponsacchi, he’s your true Saint George  
“ To slay the monster, set the Princess free,  
“ And have the whole High-Altar to himself: 1325  
“ I always think so when I see that piece  
“ I’ the Pieve, that ’s his church and mine, you know :  
“ Though you drop eyes at mention of his name !”

That name had got to take a half-grotesque  
Half-ominous, wholly enigmatic sense, 1330  
Like any bye-word, broken bit of song  
Born with a meaning, changed by mouth and mouth  
That mix it in a sneer or smile, as chance  
Bids, till it now means nought but ugliness  
And perhaps shame. 1335

—All this intends to say,  
That, over-night, the notion of escape  
Had seemed distemper, dreaming ; and the name,—  
Not the man, but the name of him, thus made

Into a mockery and disgrace,—why, she 1340

Who uttered it persistently, had laughed,

“ I name his name, and there you start and wince

“ As criminal from the red tongs’ touch ! ”—yet now,

Now, as I stood letting morn bathe me bright,

Choosing which butterfly should bear my news,— 1345

The white, the brown one, or that tinier blue,—

The Margherita, I detested so,

In she came—“ The fine day, the good Spring time !

“ What, up and out at window ? That is best.

“ No thought of Caponsacchi ?—who stood there 1350

“ All night on one leg, like the sentry crane,

“ Under the pelting of your water-spout—

“ Looked last look at your lattice ere he leave

“ Our city, bury his dead hope at Rome ?

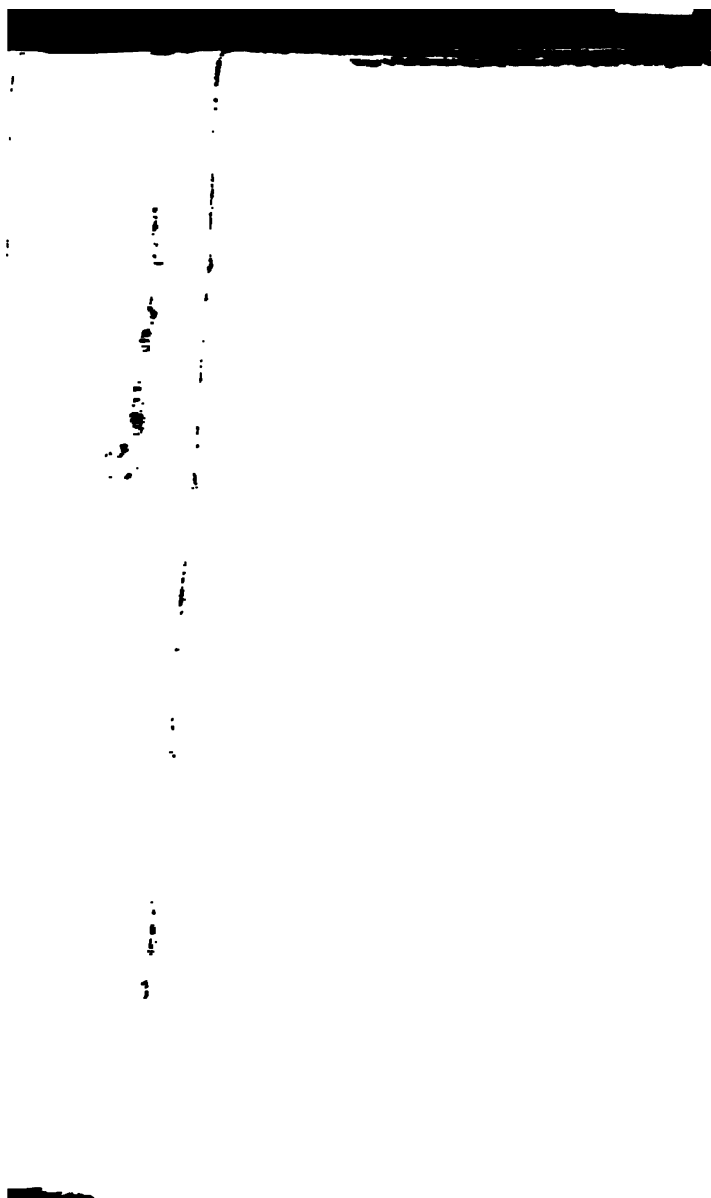
“ Ay, go to looking-glass and make you fine, 1355

“ While he may die ere touch one least loose hair

“ You drag at with the comb in such a rage ! ”

I turned—“ Tell Caponsacchi he may come ! ”

“ Tell him to come ? Ah, but, for charity,



“ A truce to fooling ! Come ? What,—come this eve ?  
“ Peter and Paul ! But I see through the trick— 1361  
“ Yes, come, and take a flower-pot on his head  
“ Flung from your terrace ! No joke, sincere truth ? ”

How plainly I perceived hell flash and fade  
O’ the face of her,—the doubt that first paled joy, 1365  
Then, final reassurance I indeed  
Was caught now, never to be free again !  
What did I care ?—who felt myself of force  
To play with the silk, and spurn the horsehair-springe.

“ But—do you know that I have bade him come, 1370  
“ And in your own name ? I presumed so much,  
“ Knowing the thing you needed in your heart.  
“ But somehow—what had I to show in proof ?  
“ He would not come : half-promised, that was all,  
“ And wrote the letters you refused to read. 1375  
“ What is the message that shall move him now ?

“ After the Ave Maria, at first dark,  
“ I will be standing on the terrace, say !



" I would I had a good long lock of hair  
" Should prove I was not lying ! Never mind ! " 1380

Off she went—" May he not refuse, that's all—  
" Fearing a trick ! "

I answered, " He will come."  
And, all day, I sent prayer like incense up  
To God the strong, God the beneficent, 1385  
God ever mindful in all strife and strait,  
Who, for our own good, makes the need extreme,  
Till at the last He puts forth might and saves.  
An old rhyme came into my head and rang  
Of how a virgin, for the faith of God, 1390  
Hid herself, from the Paynims that pursued,  
In a cave's heart ; until a thunderstone,  
Wrapped in a flame, revealed the couch and prey :  
And they laughed—" Thanks to lightning, ours at last ! "  
And she cried " Wrath of God, assert His love ! 1395  
" Servant of God, thou fire, befriend His child ! "  
And lo, the fire she grasped at, fixed its flash,  
Lay in her hand a calm cold dreadful sword

She brandished till pursuers strewed the ground,  
So did the souls within them die away, I  
As o'er the prostrate bodies, sworded, safe,  
She walked forth to the solitudes and Christ :  
So should I grasp the lightning and be saved !

And still, as the day wore, the trouble grew  
Whereby I guessed there would be born a star, I  
Until at an intense throe of the dusk,  
I started up, was pushed, I dare to say,  
Out on the terrace, leaned and looked at last  
Where the deliverer waited me : the same  
Silent and solemn face, I first descried I  
At the spectacle, confronted mine once more.

So was that minute twice vouchsafed me, so  
The manhood, wasted then, was still at watch  
To save me yet a second time : no change  
Here, though all else changed in the changing world !

I spoke on the instant, as my duty bade, I  
In some such sense as this, whatever the phrase.

“ Friend, foolish words were borne from you to me ;  
“ Your soul behind them is the pure strong wind,  
“ Not dust and feathers which its breath may bear : 1420  
“ These to the witless seem the wind itself,  
“ Since proving thus the first of it they feel.  
“ If by mischance you blew offence my way,  
“ The straws are dropt, the wind desists no whit,  
“ And how such strays were caught up in the street 1425  
“ And took a motion from you, why inquire ?  
“ I speak to the strong soul, no weak disguise.  
“ If it be truth,—why should I doubt it truth ?—  
“ You serve God specially, as priests are bound,  
“ And care about me, stranger as I am, 1430  
“ So far as wish my good,—that miracle  
“ I take to intimate He wills you serve  
“ By saving me,—what else can He direct ?  
“ Here is the service. Since a long while now,  
“ I am in course of being put to death : 1435  
“ While death concerned nothing but me, I bowed  
“ The head and bade, in heart, my husband strike.  
“ Now I imperil something more, it seems,  
“ Something that ’s trulier me than this myself,

---

“ Something I trust in God and you to save. 1440

“ You go to Rome, they tell me : take me there,

“ Put me back with my people ! ”

He replied—

The first word I heard ever from his lips,

All himself in it,—an eternity 1445

Of speech, to match the immeasurable depths

O’ the soul that then broke silence—“ I am yours.”

So did the star rise, soon to lead my step,

Lead on, nor pause before it should stand still

Above the House o’ the Babe,—my babe to be, 1450

That knew me first and thus made me know him,

That had his right of life and claim on mine,

And would not let me die till he was born,

But pricked me at the heart to save us both, 1454

Saying “ Have you the will? Leave God the way ! ”

And the way was Caponsacchi—“ mine,” thank God !

He was mine, he is mine, he will be mine.

No pause i’ the leading and the light ! I know,

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Next night there was a cloud came, and not he :  
But I prayed through the darkness till it broke 1460  
And let him shine. The second night, he came.

“ The plan is rash ; the project desperate :  
“ In such a flight needs must I risk your life,  
“ Give food for falsehood, folly or mistake,  
“ Ground for your husband’s rancour and revenge”—  
So he began again, with the same face. 1466  
I felt that, the same loyalty—one star  
Turning now red that was so white before—  
One service apprehended newly : just  
A word of mine and there the white was back ! 1470

“ No, friend, for you will take me ! ’Tis yourself  
“ Risk all, not I,—who let you, for I trust  
“ In the compensating great God : enough !  
“ I know you : when is it that you will come ?”

“ To-morrow at the day’s dawn.” Then I heard 1475  
What I should do : how to prepare for flight  
And where to fly.

That night my husband bade  
“ —You, whom I loathe, beware you break my sleep  
“ This whole night ! Couch beside me like the corpse  
“ I would you were ! ” The rest you know, I think—  
How I found Caponsacchi and escaped. 1482

And this man, men call sinner ? Jesus Christ !  
Of whom men said, with mouths Thyself mad'st once,  
“ He hath a devil ”—say he was Thy saint, 1485  
My Caponsacchi ! . Shield and show—unshroud  
In Thine own time the glory of the soul  
If aught obscure,—if ink-spot, from vile pens  
Scribbling a charge against him—(I was glad  
Then, for the first time, that I could not write)— 1490  
Flirted his way, have flecked the blaze !

For me,  
'Tis otherwise : let men take, sift my thoughts  
—Thoughts I throw like the flax for sun to bleach !  
I did think, do think, in the thought shall die, 1495  
That to have Caponsacchi for my guide,  
Ever the face upturned to mine, the hand

Holding my hand across the world,—a sense  
That reads, as only such can read, the mark  
God sets on woman, signifying so 1500  
She should—shall peradventure—be divine ;  
Yet 'ware, the while, how weakness mars the print  
And makes confusion, leaves the thing men see,  
—Not this man,—who from his own soul, re-writes  
The obliterated charter,—love and strength 1505  
Mending what's marred : "So kneels a votarist,  
"Weeds some poor waste traditionary plot  
"Where shrine once was, where temple yet may be,  
"Purging the place but worshipping the while,  
"By faith and not by sight, sight clearest so,— 1510  
"Such way the saints work,"—says Don Celestine.  
But I, not privileged to see a saint  
Of old when such walked earth with crown and palm,  
If I call "saint" what saints call something else—  
The saints must bear with me, impute the fault 1515  
To a soul i' the bud, so starved by ignorance,  
Stinted of warmth, it will not blow this year  
Nor recognize the orb which Spring-flowers know.  
But if meanwhile some insect with a heart

Worth floods of lazy music, spendthrift joy— 1520  
Some fire-fly renounced Spring for my dwarfed cup,  
Crept close to me with lustre for the dark,  
Comfort against the cold,—what though excess  
Of comfort should miscal the creature—sun ?  
What did the sun to hinder while harsh hands 1525  
Petal by petal, crude and colourless,  
Tore me ? This one heart brought me all the Spring !

Is all told ? There's the journey : and where's time  
To tell you how that heart burst out in shine ?  
Yet certain points do press on me too hard. 1530  
Each place must have a name, though I forget :  
How strange it was—there where the plain begins  
And the small river mitigates its flow—  
When eve was fading fast, and my soul sank,  
And he divined what surge of bitterness, 1535  
In overtaking me, would float me back  
Whence I was carried by the striding day—  
So,—“ This grey place was famous once,” said he—  
And he began that legend of the place  
As if in answer to the unspoken fear, 1540



d told me all about a brave man dead,  
ich lifted me and let my soul go on !  
w did he know too,—at that town's approach  
the rock-side,—that in coming near the signs,  
life, the house-roofs and the church and tower, 1545  
aw the old boundary and wall o' the world  
e plain as ever round me, hard and cold,  
if the broken circlet joined again,  
htened itself about me with no break,—  
if the town would turn Arezzo's self,— 1550  
e husband there,—the friends my enemies,  
ranged against me, not an avenue  
y, but would be blocked and drive me back  
him,—this other, . . oh the heart in that !  
l not he find, bring, put into my arms 1555  
ew-born babe ?—and I saw faces beam  
the young mother proud to teach me joy,  
l gossips round expecting my surprise  
the sudden hole through earth that lets in heaven.  
ould believe himself by his strong will 1560  
d woven around me what I thought the world  
went along in, every circumstance,

Towns, flowers and faces, all things helped so well !  
For, through the journey, was it natural  
Such comfort should arise from first to last ? 1565  
As I look back, all is one milky way ;  
Still bettered more, the more remembered, so  
Do new stars bud while I but search for old,  
And fill all gaps i' the glory, and grow him—  
Him I now see make the shine everywhere. 1570  
Even at the last when the bewildered flesh,  
The cloud of weariness about my soul  
Clogging too heavily, sucked down all sense,—  
Still its last voice was, “ He will watch and care ;  
“ Let the strength go, I am content : he stays ! ” 1575  
I doubt not he did stay and care for all—  
From that sick minute when the head swam round,  
And the eyes looked their last and died on him,  
As in his arms he caught me and, you say,  
Carried me in, that tragical red eve, 1580  
And laid me where I next returned to life  
In the other red of morning, two red plates  
That crushed together, crushed the time between,  
And are since then a solid fire to me,—

my dreadful husband and the world      1585  
nd I saw him, master, by hell's right,  
my angel helplessly held back  
that helped the malice—the lamb prone,  
nt towering and triumphant—then  
the strength back in a sudden swell,      1590  
once see right, do right, give tongue  
uate protest : for a worm must turn  
d have its wrong observed by God.  
ng up, attempt to thrust aside  
lock 'twixt the sun and me, lay low      1595  
alizer of all good and truth.  
d so,—never obey voice more  
st and Terrible, who bids us—“ Bear ! ”  
tand by, bear to see my angels bear ! ”  
r it was on impulse to serve God      1600  
myself,—no—nor my child unborn !  
e waited patiently till now ?—  
my old kind parents, silly-sooth  
much trustful, for their worst of faults,      1604  
brow-beaten, stripped and starved, cast out  
cennel : I remonstrated,

Then sank to silence, for,—their woes at end,  
Themselves gone,—only I was left to plague.  
If only I was threatened and belied,  
What matter? I could bear it and did bear; 1610  
It was a comfort, still one lot for all :  
They were not persecuted for my sake  
And I, estranged, the single happy one.  
But when at last, all by myself I stood  
Obeying the clear voice which bade me rise, 1615  
Not for my own sake but my babe unborn,  
And take the angel's hand was sent to help—  
And found the old adversary athwart the path—  
Not my hand simply struck from the angel's, but  
The very angel's self made foul i' the face 1620  
By the fiend who struck there,—that I would not bear,  
That only I resisted ! So, my first  
And last resistance was invincible.  
Prayers move God ; threats, and nothing else, move  
men !  
I must have prayed a man as he were God 1625  
When I implored the Governor to right  
My parents' wrongs : the answer was a smile.

Archbishop,—did I clasp his feet enough,  
 my face hotly on them, while I told  
 : than I dared make my own mother know? 1630  
 profit was—compassion and a jest.  
 time, the foolish prayers were done with, right  
 ! might, and solemnized the sport at once.  
 as against the combat : vantage, mine ?  
 runaway avowed, the accomplice-wife, 1635  
 ompany with the plan-contriving priest ?  
 shame thus rank and patent, I struck, bare,  
 e from head to foot in magic mail,  
 off it withered, cobweb-armoury  
 nst the lightning ! 'T was truth singed the lies 1640  
 saved me, not the vain sword nor weak speech !

see, I will not have the service fail !  
 r, the angel saved me : I am safe !  
 rs may want and wish, I wish nor want  
 point o' the circle plainer, where I stand 1645  
 ed round about with white to front the world.  
 t of the calumny I came across,  
 t o' the way to the end ?—the end crowns all.

The judges judged aright i' the main, gave me  
The uttermost of my heart's desire, a truce 1650  
From torture and Arezzo, balm for hurt  
With the quiet nuns,—God recompense the good !  
Who said and sang away the ugly past.  
And, when my final fortune was revealed,  
What safety while, amid my parents' arms, 1655  
My babe was given me ! Yes, he saved my babe :  
It would not have peeped forth, the bird-like thing,  
Through that Arezzo noise and trouble : back  
Had it returned nor ever let me see !  
But the sweet peace cured all, and let me live 1660  
And give my bird the life among the leaves  
God meant him ! Weeks and months of quietude,  
I could lie in such peace and learn so much—  
Begin the task, I see how needful now,  
Of understanding somewhat of my past,— 1665  
Know life a little, I should leave so soon.  
Therefore, because this man restored my soul,  
All has been right ; I have gained my gain, enjoyed  
As well as suffered,—nay, got foretaste too  
Of better life beginning where this ends— 1670

All through the breathing-while allowed me thus,  
Which let good premonitions reach my soul  
Unthwarted, and benignant influence flow  
And interpenetrate and change my heart,  
Uncrossed by what was wicked,—nay, unkind. 1675  
For, as the weakness of my time drew nigh,  
Nobody did me one disservice more,  
Spoke coldly or looked strangely, broke the love  
I lay in the arms of, till my boy was born,  
Born all in love, with nought to spoil the bliss 1680  
A whole long fortnight : in a life like mine  
A fortnight filled with bliss is long and much.  
All women are not mothers of a boy,  
Though they live twice the length of my whole life,  
And, as they fancy, happily all the same. 1685  
There I lay, then, all my great fortnight long,  
As if it would continue, broaden out  
Happily more and more, and lead to heaven :  
Christmas before me,—was not that a chance ?  
I never realized God's birth before— 1690  
How he grew likest God in being born.  
This time I felt like Mary, had my babe

Lying a little on my breast like hers.

So all went on till, just four days ago—

The night and the tap.

1695

O it shall be success

To the whole of our poor family ! My friends

. . . Nay, father and mother,—give me back my word !

They have been rudely stripped of life, disgraced

Like children who must needs go clothed too fine, 1700

Carry the garb of Carnival in Lent :

If they too much affected frippery,

They have been punished and submit themselves,

Say no word : all is over, they see God

Who will not be extreme to mark their fault

1705

Or He had granted respite : they are safe.

For that most woeful man my husband once,

Who, needing respite, still draws vital breath,

I—pardon him ? So far as lies in me,

I give him for his good the life he takes,

1710

Praying the world will therefore acquiesce.

Let him make God amends,—none, none to me



Who thank him rather that, whereas strange fate  
Mockingly styled him husband and me wife,  
Himself this way at least pronounced divorce, 1715  
Blotted the marriage-bond : this blood of mine  
Flies forth exultingly at any door,  
Washes the parchment white, and thanks the blow.  
We shall not meet in this world nor the next,  
But where will God be absent? In His face 1720  
Is light, but in His shadow healing too :  
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed !  
And as my presence was importunate,—  
My earthly good, temptation and a snare,—  
Nothing about me but drew somehow down 1725  
His hate upon me,—somewhat so excused  
Therefore, since hate was thus the truth of him,—  
May my evanishment for evermore  
Help further to relieve the heart that cast  
Such object of its natural loathing forth ! 1730  
So he was made ; he nowise made himself :  
I could not love him, but his mother did.  
His soul has never lain beside my soul ;  
But for the unresisting body,—thanks !

He burned that garment spotted by the flesh !  
Whatever he touched is rightly ruined : plague  
It caught, and disinfection it had craved  
Still but for Guido ; I am saved through him  
So as by fire ; to him—thanks and farewell !

Even for my babe, my boy, there's safety thence—  
From the sudden death of me, I mean : we poor  
Weak souls, how we endeavour to be strong !  
I was already using up my life,—  
This portion, now, should do him such a good,  
This other go to keep off such an ill !  
The great life ; see, a breath and it is gone !  
So is detached, so left all by itself  
The little life, the fact which means so much.  
Shall not God stoop the kindlier to His work,  
His marvel of creation, foot would crush,  
Now that the hand He trusted to receive  
And hold it, lets the treasure fall perforce ?  
The better ; He shall have in orphanage  
His own way all the clearer : if my babe  
Outlive the hour—and he has lived two weeks—

t is through God who knows I am not by.  
Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn black,  
And sets the tongue, might lie so long at rest,  
Trying to talk ? Let us leave God alone !  
Why should I doubt He will explain in time 1760  
What I feel now, but fail to find the words ?  
My babe nor was, nor is, nor yet shall be  
Count Guido Franceschini's child at all—  
Only his mother's, born of love not hate !  
So shall I have my rights in after-time. 1765  
It seems absurd, impossible to-day ;  
So seems so much else not explained but known.

Ah ! Friends, I thank and bless you every one !  
No more now : I withdraw from earth and man  
To my own soul, compose myself for God. 1770

Well, and there is more ! Yes, my end of breath  
Shall bear away my soul in being true !  
He is still here, not outside with the world,  
Here, here, I have him in his rightful place !  
T is now, when I am most upon the move, 1775

I feel for what I verily find—again  
The face, again the eyes, again, through all,  
The heart and its immeasurable love  
Of my one friend, my only, all my own,  
Who put his breast between the spears and me. 1780  
Ever with Caponsacchi ! Otherwise  
Here alone would be failure, loss to me—  
How much more loss to him, with life debarred  
From giving life, love locked from love's display, 1784  
The day-star stopped its task that makes night morn !  
O lover of my life, O soldier-saint,  
No work begun shall ever pause for death !  
Love will be helpful to me more and more  
I' the coming course, the new path I must tread,  
My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for that ! 1790  
Tell him that if I seem without him now,  
That's the world's insight ! Oh, he understands !  
He is at Civita—do I once doubt  
The world again is holding us apart ?  
He had been here, displayed in my behalf 1795  
The broad brow that reverberates the truth,  
And flashed the word God gave him, back to man !

I know where the free soul is flown ! My fate  
Will have been hard for even him to bear :  
Let it confirm him in the trust of God, 1800  
Showing how holily he dared the deed !  
And, for the rest,—say, from the deed, no touch  
Of harm came, but all good, all happiness,  
Not one faint fleck of failure ! Why explain ?  
What I see, oh, he sees and how much more ! 1805  
Tell him,—I know not wherefore the true word  
Should fade and fall unuttered at the last—  
It was the name of him I sprang to meet  
When came the knock, the summons and the end. 1809  
“ My great heart, my strong hand are back again ! ”  
I would have sprung to these, beckoning across  
Murder and hell gigantic and distinct  
O’ the threshold, posted to exclude me heaven :  
He is ordained to call and I to come ! 1814  
Do not the dead wear flowers when dressed for God ?  
Say,—I am all in flowers from head to foot !  
Say,—not one flower of all he said and did,  
Might seem to flit unnoticed, fade unknown,  
But dropped a seed has grown a balsam-tree

---

Whereof the blossoming perfumes the place 1820  
At this supreme of moments ! He is a priest ;  
He cannot marry therefore, which is right :  
I think he would not marry if he could.  
Marriage on earth seems such a counterfeit,  
Mere imitation of the inimitable : 1825  
In heaven we have the real and true and sure.  
'T is there they neither marry nor are given  
In marriage but are as the angels : right,  
Oh how right that is, how like Jesus Christ  
To say that ! Marriage-making for the earth, 1830  
With gold so much,—birth, power, repute so much,  
Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of these !  
Be as the angels rather, who, apart,  
Know themselves into one, are found at length  
Married, but marry never, no, nor give 1835  
In marriage ; they are man and wife at once  
When the true time is : here we have to wait  
Not so long neither ! Could we by a wish  
Have what we will and get the future now,  
Would we wish aught done undone in the past ? 1840  
So, let him wait God's instant men call years ;

---

ime hold hard by truth and his great soul,  
t the duty ! Through such souls alone  
tooping shows sufficient of His light  
: i' the dark to rise by. And I rise.

1845

VIII.  
DOMINUS HYACINTHUS DE  
ARCHANGELIS,  
PAUPERUM PROCURATOR.

AH, my Giacinto, he 's no ruddy rogue,  
Is not Cinone? What, to-day we 're eight?  
Seven and one 's eight, I hope, old curly-pate!  
—Branches me out his verb-tree on the slate,  
*Amo -as -avi -atum -are -ans,* 5  
Up to *-aturus*, person, tense, and mood,  
*Quies me cum subjunctivo* (I could cry)  
And chews Corderius with his morning crust!  
Look eight years onward, and he 's perched, he 's perched,  
Dapper and deft on stool beside this chair, 10



Cinozzo, Cinoncello, who but he?

—Trying his milk-teeth on some crusty case

Like this, papa shall triturate full soon

To smooth Papinianian pulp!

It trots 15

Already through my head, though noon be now,

Does supper-time and what belongs to eve.

Dispose, O Don, o' the day, first work then play!

—The proverb bids. And "then" means, won't we  
hold

Our little yearly lovesome frolic feast, 20

Cinuolo's birth-night, Cinicello's own,

That makes gruff January grin perforce!

For too contagious grows the mirth, the warmth

Escaping from so many hearts at once—

When the good wife, buxom and bonny yet, 25

Jokes the hale grandsire,—such are just the sort

To go off suddenly,—he who hides the key

O' the box beneath his pillow every night,—

Which box may hold a parchment (some one thinks)

Will show a scribbled something like a name 30

"Cinino, Ciniccino," near the end,

---

“ To whom I give and I bequeath my lands,  
“ Estates, tenements, hereditaments,  
“ When I decease as honest grandsire ought : ”  
Wherefore—yet this one time again perhaps— 35  
Sha’n’t my Orvieto fuddle his old nose !  
Then, uncles, one or the other, well i’ the world,  
May—drop in, merely ?—trudge through rain and wind,  
Rather ! The smell-feasts rouse them at the hint  
There ’s cookery in a certain dwelling-place ! 40  
Gossips, too, each with keepsake in his poke,  
Will pick the way, thrird lane by lantern-light,  
And so find door, put galligaskin off  
At entry of a decent domicile  
Cornered in snug Condotti,—all for love, 45  
All to crush cup with Cinucciatolo !

Well,

Let others climb the heights o’ the court, the camp !  
How vain are chambering and wantonness,  
Revel and rout and pleasures that make mad ! 50  
Commend me to home-joy, the family board,  
Altar and hearth ! These, with a brisk career,  
A source of honest profit and good fame,

Just so much work as keeps the brain from rust,  
Just so much play as lets the heart expand, 55  
Honouring God and serving man,—I say,  
These are reality, and all else,—fluff,  
Nutshell and naught,—thank Flaccus for the phrase !  
Suppose I had been Fisc, yet bachelor !

Why, work with a will, then ! Wherefore lazy now ? 60  
Turn up the hour-glass, whence no sand-grain slips  
But should have done its duty to the saint  
O' the day, the son and heir that 's eight years old !  
Let law come dimple Cinoncino's cheek,  
And Latin dumple Cinarello's chin, 65  
The while we spread him fine and toss him flat  
This pulp that makes the pancake, trim our mass  
Of matter into Argument the First,  
Prime Pleading in defence of our accused,  
Which, once a-waft on paper wing, shall soar, 70  
Shall signalise before applausive Rome  
What study, and mayhap some mother-wit,  
Can do toward making Master fop and Fisc  
Old bachelor Bottinius bite his thumb.

Now, how good God is ! How falls plumb to point 75  
This murder, gives me Guido to defend  
Now, of all days i' the year, just when the boy  
Verges on Virgil, reaches the right age  
For some such illustration from his sire,  
Stimulus to himself ! One might wait years 80  
And never find the chance which now finds me !  
The fact is, there's a blessing on the hearth,  
A special providence for fatherhood !  
Here's a man, and what's more, a noble, kills  
—Not sneakingly but almost with parade— 85  
Wife's father and wife's mother and wife's self  
That's mother's self of son and heir (like mine !)  
—And here stand I, the favoured advocate,  
Who pluck this flower o' the field, no Solomon '  
Was ever clothed in glorious gold to match, 90  
And set the same in Cinoncino's cap !  
I defend Guido and his comrades—I !  
Pray God, I keep me humble : not to me—  
*Non nobis, Domine, sed tibi laus !*  
How the fop chuckled when they made him Fisc ! 95  
We'll beat you, my Bottinius, all for love,

All for our tribute to Cinotto's day !  
Why, 'sbuddikins, old Innocent himself  
May rub his eyes at the bustle,—ask " What's this  
" Rolling from out the rostrum, as a gust 100  
" O' the *Pro Milone* had been prisoned there,  
" And rattled Rome awake ? " Awaken Rome,  
How can the Pope doze on in decency ?  
He needs must wake up also, speak his word,  
Have his opinion like the rest of Rome, 105  
About this huge, this hurly-burly case :  
He wants who can excogitate the truth,  
Give the result in speech, plain black and white,  
To mumble in the mouth and make his own  
—A little changed, good man, a little changed ! 110  
No matter, so his gratitude be moved,  
By when my Giacintino gets of age,  
Mindful of who thus helped him at a pinch,  
*Archangelus Procurator Pauperum*—  
And proved Hortensius *Redivivus* ! 115

Whew !

To earn the *Est-est*, merit the minced herb  
That mollifies the liver's leathery slice,

With here a goose-foot, there a cock's-comb stuck,  
 Cemented in an element of cheese ! 120  
 I doubt if dainties do the grandsire good :  
 Last June he had a sort of strangling . . . bah !  
 He 's his own master, and his will is made.  
 So, liver fizz, law flit and Latin fly  
 As we rub hands o'er dish by way of grace ! 125  
 May I lose cause if I vent one word more  
 Except,—with fresh-cut quill we ink the white,—  
*P-r-o-pro Guidone et Sociis.* There !

Count Guido married—or, in Latin due,  
 What ? *Duxit in uxorem* ?—commonplace ! 130  
*Tædas jugales iniit, subiit*,—ha !  
 He underwent the matrimonial torch ?  
*Connubio stabili sibi junxit*,—hum !  
 In stable bond of marriage bound his own ?  
 That 's clear of any modern taint : and yet . . . 135

Virgil is little help to who writes prose.  
 He shall attack me Terence with the dawn,  
 Shall Cinuccino ! Mum, mind business, Sir !

circumstantially evolve we facts,  
*abet ideo series facti :* 140  
 lded,—ah, with owls for augury !  
*ut, heu sinistris avibus,*  
 the blood Arezzo boasts her best,  
*is Guido, nobili genere ortus,*  
*æ . . .*

But the version afterward ! 145  
 e this ardour ! Notes alone, to-day,  
 ech to-morrow and the Latin last :  
 s the rule in Farinacci's time.  
 I hitched it into verse and good.  
 ly, law quite absorbs a man, 150  
 I think I too had poetized.  
 ; the pork substratum of the fry,  
 -foot and cocks-comb are Latinity,"—  
 his case, if circumstance assist,  
 urnish law with idiom, never fear ! 155  
 e-way events extend our scope :  
 unce, when Bottini brings his charge,  
 etter which you say Pompilia wrote,

" To criminate her parents and herself  
 " And disengage her husband from the coil,— 160  
 " That, Guido Franceschini wrote, say we :  
 " Because Pompilia could nor read nor write,  
 " Therefore he pencilled her such letter first,  
 " Then made her trace in ink the same again."  
 —Ha, my Bottini, have I thee on hip ? 165  
 How will he turn this nor break Tully's pate ?  
 " *Existimandum*" (do n't I hear the dog !)  
 " *Quod Guido designaverit elementa*  
 " *Dictæ epistolæ, quæ fuerint*  
 " (*Superinducto ab ea calamo*) 170  
 " *Notata atramento*"—there 's a style !—  
 " *Quia ipsa scribere nesciebat.*" Boh !  
 Now, my turn ! Either, *Insulse* !—I outburst,  
 Stupidly put ! Inane is the response,  
*Inanis est responsio*, or the like— 175  
 To-wit, that each of all those characters,  
*Quod singula elementa epistolæ*,  
 Had first of all been traced for her by him,  
*Fuerant per eum prius designata*,  
 And then, the ink applied a-top of that, 180



*Et acinde, superinducto calamo,*

The piece, she says, became her handiwork,

*Per eam, efformata, ut ipsa asserit.*

nane were such response ! (a second time :)

Her husband outlined her the whole, forsooth ? 185

*Vir ejus lineabat epistolam ?*

What, she confesses that she wrote the thing,

*Fatetur eam scripsisse,* (scorn that scathes !)

That she might pay obedience to her lord ?

*Ut viro obtemperaret, apices* 190

(Here repeat charge with proper varied phrase)

*Eo designante, ipsaque calamum*

*Super inducente ?* By such argument,

*Ita pariter,* she seeks to show the same,

(Ay, by Saint Joseph and what saints you please) 195

*Epistolam ostendit, medius fidius,*

No voluntary deed but fruit of force !

*Non voluntarie sed coacte scriptam !*

That 's the way to write Latin, friend my Fisc !

Bottini is a beast, one barbarous : 200

Look out for him when he attempts to say

“ Armed with a pistol, Guido followed her ! ”

Will not I be beforehand with my Fisc,  
 Cut away phrase by phrase from underfoot !  
*Guido Pompiliam*—Guido thus his wife 205  
 Following with igneous engine, shall I have ?  
*Armis munitus igneis persequens*—  
*Arma sulphurea gestans*, sulphury arms,  
 Or, might one style a pistol—popping-piece ?  
*Armatus breviori sclopulo* ? 210  
 We 'll let him have been armed so, though it make  
 Somewhat against us : I had thought to own—  
 Provided with a simple travelling-sword,  
*Ense solummodo viatorio*  
*Instructus* : but we 'll grant the pistol here : 215  
 Better we lost the cause than lacked the gird  
 At the Fisc's Latin, lost the Judge's laugh !  
 It 's Venturini that decides for style.  
 Tommati rather goes upon the law.  
 So, as to law,— 220

Ah, but with law ne'er hope  
 To level the fellow,—do 'nt I know his trick !  
 How he draws up, ducks under, twists aside !

s a lean-gutted hectic rascal, fine  
ale-haired red-eyed ferret which pretends 225  
ermine, pure soft snow from tail to snout.  
eludes law by piteous looks aloft,  
Latin glance off as he makes appeal  
he saint that 's somewhere in the ceiling-top,—  
you suppose that I do n't see the beast ? 230  
ue of the ermine-vermin ! For it takes,  
kes, and here 's the fellow Fisc, you see,  
Judge, you 'll not be long in seeing next !  
found the fop—he 's now at work like me :  
r his study, as I seem to do, 235  
r him read out his writing to himself !  
ow he writes as if he spoke : I hear  
hoarse shrill throat, see shut eyes, neck shot-forth,  
see him strain on tiptoe, soar and pour  
puence out, nor stay nor stint at all— 240  
rate in the air, and so, to press  
1 the product ! What abuse of type is here !  
'll keep clear of my cast, my logic-throw,  
argument slide, and then deliver swift  
e bowl from quite an unguessed point of stand —

---

Having the luck o' the last word, the reply ! 246  
A plaguy cast, a mortifying stroke :  
You face a fellow—cries “ So, there you stand ?  
“ But I discourteous jump clean o'er your head !  
“ You play ship-carpenter, not pilot so,— 250  
“ Stop rat-holes, while a sea sweeps through the breach,—  
“ Hammer and fortify at puny points !  
“ Do, clamp and tenon, make all tight and safe !  
“ 'Tis here and here and here you ship a sea,  
“ No good of your stopped leaks and littleness ! ” 255

Yet what do I name “ little and a leak ? ”  
The main defence o' the murder 's used to death,  
By this time, dry bare bones, no scrap to pick :  
Safer I worked at the new, the unforeseen,  
The nice bye-stroke, the fine and improvised, 260  
Point that can titillate the brain o' the Bench  
Torpido with over-teaching, by this time !  
As if Tommati, that has heard, reheard  
And heard again, first this side and then that,—  
Guido and Pietro, Pietro and Guido din 265  
And deafen, full three years, at each long ear,—

n't want amusement for instruction now,  
i't rather feel a flea run o'er his ribs,  
n a daw settle heavily on his head !  
I was young and had the trick of fence, 270  
w subtle pass and push with careless right—  
left arm ever quietly behind back  
n the dagger in 't : not both hands to blade !  
' and blow, put the strength out, Blunderbore !  
t 's my subordinate, young Spreti, now, 275  
ant and prig,—he 'll pant away at proof,  
t 's his way !

Now for mine—to rub some life  
o one's choppy fingers this cold day !  
1st Cinuzzo ties on tippet, guards 280  
precious throat on which so much depends !  
do must be all goose-flesh in his hole,  
pite the prison-straw : bad Carnival  
captives ! no sliced fry for him, poor Count !  
rival-time,—another providence ! 285  
town a-swarm with strangers to amuse,

To edify, to give one's name and fame  
In charge of, till they find, some future day,  
Cintino come and claim it, his name too,  
Pledge of the pleasantness they owe papa— 290  
Who else was it, cured Rome of her great qualms,  
When she must needs have her own judgment?—ay  
Since all her topping wits had set to work,  
Pronounced already on the case : mere boys,  
Twice Cineruggiolo's age and half his sense, 295  
As good as tell me, when I cross the court,  
" Master Arcangeli ! " (plucking at my gown)  
" We can predict, we comprehend your play,  
" We 'll help you save your client." Tra-la-la !  
I 've travelled ground, from childhood till this hour, 300  
To have the town anticipate my track !  
The old fox takes the plain and velvet path,  
The young hound's predilection,—prints the dew,  
Do n't he, to suit their pulpy pads of paw ?  
No ! Burying nose deep down i' the briery bush, 305  
Thus I defend Count Guido.

Where are we weak ?

First, which is foremost in advantage too,

murder,—we call, killing,—is a fact  
ssed, defended, made a boast of : good ! 310  
ink the Fisc claimed use of torture here,  
got thereby avowal plump and plain  
gives me just the chance I wanted,—scope  
or brute-force but ingenuity,  
ining matters, not denying them ! 315  
nay dispute,—as I am bound to do,  
shall,—validity of process here :  
such as a noble is exempt  
torture which plebeians undergo  
ch a case : for law is lenient, lax, 320  
ts the torture to a nobleman  
s suspicion be of twice the strength  
hes to a man born vulgarly :  
o n't card silk with comb that dresses wool.  
over, 'twas severity undue 325  
s case, even had the lord been lout.  
utters, on this head, our oracle,  
arinacci, my Gamaliel erst,  
se immortal " Questions ? " What I quote :  
all the tools at Law's disposal, sure 330

“ That named *Vigiliarum* is the best—  
“ That is, the worst—to whoso has to bear :  
“ Lasting, as it may do, from some seven hours  
“ To ten, (beyond ten, we 've no precedent ;  
“ Certain have touched their ten but, bah, they died !)  
“ It does so efficaciously convince 336  
“ That,—speaking by much observation here,—  
“ Out of each hundred cases, by my count,  
“ Never I **knew** of patients beyond four  
“ Withstand its taste, or less than ninety-six 340  
“ End by succumbing : only martyrs four,  
“ Of obstinate silence, guilty or no,—against  
“ Ninety-six full confessors, innocent  
“ Or otherwise,—so shrewd a tool have we ! ”  
No marvel either : in unwary hands, 345  
Death on the spot is no rare consequence :  
As indeed all but happened in this case  
To one of ourselves, our young tough peasant-friend  
The accomplice called Baldeschi : they were rough,  
Dosed him with torture as you drench a horse, 350  
Not modify your treatment to a man :  
So, two successive days he fainted dead,



only on the third essay, gave up,  
 fessed like flesh and blood. We could reclaim,—  
 khead Bottini giving cause enough ! 355  
 no,—we 'll take it as spontaneously  
 fessed : we 'll have the murder beyond doubt.  
 fortunate (the poet's word reversed)  
 much as we know our happiness !  
 the antagonist left dubiety, 360  
 : were we proving murder a mere myth,  
 Guido innocent, ignorant, absent,—ay,  
 nt ! He was—why, where should Christian be ?—  
 ged in visiting his proper church,  
 duty of us all at Christmas-time ; 365  
 n Caponsacchi, the seducer, stung  
 adness by his relegation, cast  
 it him and contrived a remedy :  
 tave off what opprobrium broke afresh,  
 ie birth o' the babe, on him the imputed sire, 370  
 ame and quietly sought to smother up  
 shame and theirs together,—killed the three,  
 fled—(go seek him where you please to search)—  
 at the moment, Guido, touched by grace,

Devotions ended, hastened to the spot, 375  
Meaning to pardon his convicted wife,  
“ Neither do I condemn thee, go in peace ! ”—  
Who thus arrived i’ the nick of time to catch  
The charge o’ the killing, though great-heartedly  
He came but to forgive and bring to life. 380  
Doubt ye the force of Christmas on the soul ?  
“ Is thine eye evil because mine is good ? ”

So, doubtless, had I needed argue here  
But for the full confession round and sound !  
Thus would you have some kingly alchemist,— 385  
Whose concern should not be with proving brass  
Transmutable to gold, but triumphing,  
Rather, above his gold changed out of brass,  
Not vulgarly to the mere sight and touch,  
• But in the idea, the spiritual display, 390  
Proud apparition buoyed by winged words  
Hovering above its birth-place in the brain,—  
Here would you have this excellent personage  
Forced, by the gross need, to gird apron round,  
Plant forge, light fire, ply bellows,—in a word, 395

monstrate—when a faulty pipkin's crack  
 y disconcert you his presumptive truth !  
 re were I hanging to the testimony  
 one of these poor rustics—four, ye Gods !  
 om the first taste of friend the Fiscal's cord 400  
 ght drive into undoing my whole speech,  
 aming truth so !

I wonder, all the same,  
 t so much at those peasants' lack of heart ;  
 t—Guido Franceschini, nobleman, 405  
 ar pain no better ! Everybody knows  
 used once, when my father was a boy,  
 form a proper, nay, important point  
 the education of our well-born youth,  
 o take the torture handsomely at need, 410  
 ithout confessing in this clownish guise.  
 ch noble had his rack for private use,  
 d would, for the diversion of a guest,  
 l it be set up in the yard of arms,  
 o take thereon his hour of exercise,— 415  
 mmand the varletry stretch, strain their best,  
 ile friends looked on, admired my lord could smile

'Mid tugging which had caused an ox to roar.  
Men are no longer men !

—And advocates

No longer Farinacci, let men add,  
If I one more time fly from point proposed !  
So, *Vindictio*,—here begins the same !—  
*Honoris causa* ; so we make our stand :  
Honour in us had injury, we shall prove.  
Or if we fail to prove such injury  
More than misprision of the fact,—what then ?  
It is enough, authorities declare,  
If the result, the deed in question now,  
Be caused by confidence that injury  
Is veritable and no figment : since,  
What, though proved fancy afterward, seemed fact  
At the time, they argue shall excuse result.  
That which we do, persuaded of good cause  
For what we do, hold justifiable !—  
The casuists bid : man, bound to do his best,  
They would not have him leave that best undone  
And mean to do the worst,—though fuller light

ow best was worst and worst would have been best.  
 t by the present light, they ask of man. 440  
*tra quod hic non agitur*, besides  
 is not anyway our business here,  
*: probatione adulterii*,  
 o prove what we thought crime was crime indeed,  
*t irrogandam pœnam*, and require 445  
 s punishment : such nowise do we seek :  
*d ad effectum*, but 't is our concern,  
*xcusandi*, here to simply find excuse,  
*ccisorem*, for who did the killing-work,  
*t ad illius defensionem*, (mark 450  
 he difference !) and defend the man, just that.  
*uo casu levior probatio*  
*xuberaret*, to which end far lighter proof  
 ffices than the prior case would claim :  
 should be always harder to convict, 455  
 h short, than to establish innocence.  
 herefore we shall demonstrate first of all  
 hat Honour is a gift of God to man  
 recious beyond compare,—which natural sense  
 f human rectitude and purity,— 460

Which white, man's soul is born with, brooks no touch :  
Therefore, the sensitivest spot of all,  
Woundable by a wafture breathed from black,  
Is,—honour within honour, like the eye  
Centred i' the ball,—the honour of our wife. 465  
Touch us o' the pupil of our honour, then,  
Not actually,—since so you slay outright,—  
But by a gesture simulating touch,  
Presumable mere menace of such taint,—  
This were our warrant for eruptive ire 470  
“ To whose dominion I impose no end.”

(Virgil, now, should not be too difficult  
To Cinoncino,—say the early books . . . .  
Pen, truce to further gambols ! *Poscimur !*)

Nor can revenge of injury done here 475  
To the honour proved the life and soul of us,  
Be too excessive, too extravagant :  
Such wrong seeks and must have complete revenge.  
Show we this, first, on the mere natural ground :  
Begin at the beginning, and proceed 480

controvertibly. Theodoric,  
 an apt sentence Cassiodorus cites,  
 opounds for basis of all household law—  
 hardly recollect it, but it ends,  
 Bird mates with bird, beast genders with his like, 485  
 And brooks no interference : " bird and beast ?  
 he very insects . . . if they wive or no,  
 ow dare I say when Aristotle doubts ?  
 at the presumption is they likewise wive,  
 least the nobler sorts ; for take the bee 490  
 instance,—copying King Solomon,—  
 ly that displeasure of the bee to aught  
 at savours of incontinency, makes  
 e unchaste a very horror to the hive ?  
 ence comes it bees obtain the epithet 495  
*caste apes* ? notably " the chaste ?"  
 ause, ingeniously saith Scaliger,  
 e young one—see his book of Table-talk)  
 uch is their hatred of immodest act,  
 hey fall upon the offender, sting to death." 500  
 ind a passage much confirmative  
 he Idyllist (though I read him Latinized)  
 OL. III. I

“ Why ” asks a shepherd, “ is this bank unfit  
“ For celebration of our vernal loves ? ”  
“ Oh swain,” returns the wiser shepherdess, 505  
“ Bees swarm here, and would quick resent our warmth ! ”  
Only cold-blooded fish lack instinct here,  
Nor gain nor guard connubiality :  
But beasts, quadrupedal, mammiferous,  
Do credit to their beasthood : witness him, 510  
That Ælian cites, the noble elephant,  
(Or if not Ælian, somebody as sage)  
Who seeing much offence beneath his nose,  
His master’s friend exceed in courtesy  
The due allowance to that master’s wife, 515  
Taught them good manners and killed both at once,  
Making his master and all men admire.  
Indubitably, then, that master’s self  
Favoured by circumstance, had done the same  
Or else stood clear rebuked by his own beast. 520  
*Adeo, ut qui honorem spernit, thus,*  
Who values his own honour not a straw,—  
*Et non recuperare curat, nor*  
Labours by might and main to salve its wound,



do, by revenging him, 525

at a belluis, is a brute,

rrationabilior

lluis, nay, contrariwise,

re irrational than brutes themselves,

considered, *reputetur* ! How ? 530

animal feel honour smart,

' blind instinct nature plants in him,

,—confessed creation's master-stroke,

lectual glory, nay, a god,

the nature of my Judges here,— 535

prove the insensible, the block,

' the earth he crawls on to disgrace ?

at's both solid and poetic)—man

live for the low tastes alone,

oping cares about the animal life ? 540

have remembered, nothing stings

out of its monotony

is like a root of fennel, chopped

the parsley : parsley-sprigs, I said—

need I should say "and fennel too ?" 545

But no, she cannot have been so obtuse !  
To our argument ! The fennel will be chopped.

From beast to man next mount we—ay, but, mind,  
Still mere man, not yet Christian,—that, in time !  
Not too fast, mark you ! 'Tis on Heathen grounds' 550  
We next defend our act : then, fairly urge—  
If this were done of old, in a green tree,  
Allowed in the Spring rawness of our kind,  
What may be licenced in the Autumn dry,  
And ripe, the latter harvest-tide of man ? 555  
If, with his poor and primitive half-lights,  
The Pagan, whom our devils served for gods,  
Could stigmatise the breach of marriage-vow  
As that which blood, blood only might efface,—  
Absolve the husband, outraged, whose revenge 560  
Anticipated law, plied sword himself,—  
How with the Christian in full blaze of day ?  
Shall not he rather double penalty,  
Multiply vengeance, than, degenerate,  
Let privilege be minished, droop, decay ? 565  
Therefore set forth at large the ancient law !

erabundant the examples be  
 pick and choose from. The Athenian Code,  
 on's, the name is serviceable,—then,  
 : Laws of the Twelve Tables, that fifteenth,— 570  
 omulus " likewise rolls out round and large.  
 : Julian ; the Cornelian ; Gracchus' Law :  
 old a chime, the bells ring of themselves !  
 eti can set that going if he please,  
 oint you, for my part, the belfry out, 575  
 ent to rise from dusk, *diluculum*,  
 o the Christian day shall broaden next.

t, the fit compliment to His Holiness  
 ppily reigning : then sustain the point—  
 that was long ago declared as law 580  
 the early Revelation, stands confirmed  
 Apostle and Evangelist and Saint,—  
 wit—that Honour is the supreme good.  
 y should I baulk Saint Jerome of his phrase ?  
 i *honor non est*, where no honour is, 585  
 i *contemptus est* ; and where contempt,  
 i *injuria frequens* ; and where that,

The frequent injury, *ibi et indignatio* ;  
And where the indignation, *ibi quies*  
*Nulla* ; and where there is no quietude, 590  
Why, *ibi*, there, the mind is often cast  
Down from the heights where it proposed to dwell,  
*Mens a proposito sæpe dejicitur.*  
And naturally the mind is so cast down,  
Since harder 't is, *quum difficilius sit*, 595  
*Iram cohibere*, to coerce one's wrath,  
*Quam miracula facere*, than work miracles,—  
Saint Gregory smiles in his First Dialogue :  
Whence we infer, the ingenuous soul, the man  
Who makes esteem of honour and repute, 600  
Whenever honour and repute are touched,  
Arrives at term of fury and despair,  
Loses all guidance from the reason-check :  
As in delirium, or a frenzy-fit,  
Nor fury nor despair he satiates,—no, 605  
Not even if he attain the impossible,  
O'erturn the hinges of the universe  
To annihilate—not whoso caused the smart  
Solely, the author simply of his pain,

the place, the memory, *vituperii*, 610  
 he shame and scorn : *quia*,—says Solomon,  
 e Holy Spirit speaking by his mouth  
 Proverbs, the sixth chapter near the end)  
 ecause, the zeal and fury of a man,  
*s et furor viri*, will not spare, 615  
*parcet*, in the day of his revenge,  
*lie vindictæ*, nor will acquiesce,  
*acquiescet*, through a person's prayers,  
*usdam precibus*,—*nec suscipiet*,  
 yet take, *pro redemptione*, for 620  
 lempion, *dona plurium*, gifts of friends,  
 money-payment to compound for ache.  
 o recognises not my client's case ?  
 ere to, as strangely consentaneous here,  
 luce Saint Bernard in the Epistle writ 625  
 Robertulus, his nephew : Too much grief,  
*or quippe nimius non deliberat*,  
 s not excogitate propriety,  
*verecundatur*, nor knows shame at all,  
*consulit rationem*, nor consults 630  
 son, *non dignitatis metuit*

*Damnum*, nor dreads the loss of dignity ;  
*Modum et ordinem*, order and the mode,  
*Ignorat*, it ignores : why, trait for trait,  
Was ever portrait limned so like the life ? 635  
(By Cavalier Maratta, shall I say ?  
I hear he's first in reputation now.)  
Yes, that of Samson in the Sacred Text :  
That's not so much the portrait as the man !  
Samson in Gaza was the antetype 640  
Of Guido at Rome : for note the Nazarite !  
Blinded he was,—an easy thing to bear,  
Intrepidly he took imprisonment,  
Gyves, stripes and daily labour at the mill :  
But when he found himself, i' the public place, 645  
Destined to make the common people sport,  
Disdain burned up with such an impetus  
I' the breast of him that, all of him on fire,  
*Moriatur*, roared he, let my soul's self die,  
*Anima mea*, with the Philistines ! 650  
So, pulled down pillar, roof, and death and all,  
*Multosque plures interfecit*, ay,  
And many more he killed thus, *moriens*,

*m vivus*, than in his whole life,  
 ie ever killed before. 655  
 hings writ for no example, Sirs?  
 ce more, and let me see who doubts!  
 Himself, made up of mansuetude,  
 sum of sufferance up, received  
 n, contumely and buffeting 660  
 mplaint : but when He found Himself  
 His honour never so little for once,  
 oke indignation pent before—  
*meum nemini dabo !* “ No,  
 ur I to nobody will give ! ” 665  
 ly the example so hath wrought,  
 ever, at the proper worth,  
 orldly honour and repute,  
 nobler to die honoured man  
 annaia, than live centuries 670  
 n the eye o’ the world. We find Saint Paul  
 t to this faith delivered once :  
 rier were it that I died,” cries he,  
*hi magis mori*, “ than  
 one should make my glory void,” 675

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*Quam ut gloriam meam quis evacuet !*

See, *ad Corinthienses* : whereupon

Saint Ambrose makes a comment with much fruit,

Doubtless my Judges long since laid to heart,

So I desist from bringing forward here— 680

(I can't quite recollect it.)

Have I proved

*Satis superque*, both enough and to spare,

That Revelation old and new admits

The natural man may effervesce in ire, 685

O'erflood earth, o'erfroth heaven with foamy rage,

At the first puncture to his self-respect ?

Then, Sirs, this Christian dogma, this law-bud

Full-blown now, soon to bask the absolute flower

Of Papal doctrine in our blaze of day,— 690

Bethink you, shall we miss one promise-streak,

One doubtful birth of dawn crepuscular,

One dew-drop comfort to humanity,

Now that the chalice teems with noonday wine ?

Yea, argue Molinists who bar revenge— 695

Referring just to what makes out our case !



pensation, argue they,  
the adulterous wife was death,  
Moses' law. "Nay, stone her not,  
why!" next legislates our Lord; 700  
"Nor yet divorce a wife!"  
the Church, "she typifies ourself,  
her fault shall cause to fall from Christ."  
not nor tittle of the Law  
may—which who presumes to doubt? 705  
word of Christ is rendered vain—  
not be though heaven and earth should pass?  
to find my proper punishment  
for my sinful wife, I humbly ask  
of the Pope,—who now remits 710  
penance allowed by Christ in lieu  
of what Moses licensed me?  
repeals the Law which throws the stone,  
repeals the divorce-bill Gospel grants,  
and enjoys impunity! 715  
in the fulness of the days,  
reparation, I demand,  
Gospel and the Church subjoin

" But who hath barred thee primitive revenge,  
" Which, like fire damped and dammed up, burns more  
fierce ? 720

" Use thou thy natural privilege of man,  
" Else wert thou found like those old ingrate Jews,  
" Despite the manna-banquet on the board,  
" A-longing after melons, cucumbers  
" And such like trash of Egypt left behind ! " 725  
(There was one melon, had improved our soup,  
But did not Cinoncino need the rind  
To make a boat with? So I seem to think.)

Law, Gospel and the Church—from these we leap  
To the very last revealment, easy rule 730  
Befitting the well-born and thorough-bred  
O' the happy day we live in,—not the dark  
O' the early rude and acorn-eating race.  
" Behold," quoth James, " we bridle in a horse  
" And turn his body as we would thereby ! " 735  
Yea, but we change the bit to suit the growth,  
And rasp our colt's jaw with a rugged spike  
We hasten to remit our managed steed

Who wheels round at persuasion of a touch.  
 Civilization bows to decency, 740  
 The acknowledged use and wont, the manners,—mild  
 But yet imperative law,—which make the man.  
 Thus do we pay the proper compliment  
 To rank, and that society of Rome,  
 Hath so obliged us by its interest, 745  
 Taken our client's part instinctively,  
 As unaware defending its own cause.  
 What *dictum* doth Society lay down  
 'T the case of one who hath a faithless wife?  
 Wherewithal should the husband cleanse his way? 750  
 Be patient and forgive? Oh, language fails—  
 Shrinks from depicting his punishment!  
 For if wronged husband raise not hue and cry,  
*Quod si maritus de adulterio non*  
*conquereretur*, he's presumed a—foh! 755  
*Presumitur leno*: so, complain he must.  
 But how complain? At your tribunal, lords?  
 Far weightier challenge suits your sense, I wot!  
 'Tou sit not to have gentlemen propose  
 Questions gentility can itself discuss. 760

Did not you prove that to our brother Paul?

The Abate, *quum judicialiter*

*Prosequeretur*, when he tried the law,

*Guidonis causam*, in Count Guido's case,

*Accidit ipsi*, this befell himself, 765

*Quod risum moverit et cachinnos*, that

He moved to mirth and cachinnation, all

Or nearly all, *fere in omnibus*

*Etiam sensatis et cordatis*, men

Strong-sensed, sound-hearted, nay, the very Court, 770

*Ipsismet in iudiciis*, I might add,

*Non tamen dicam*. In a cause like this,

So multiplied were reasons *pro* and *con*,

Delicate, intertwisted and obscure,

That law were shamed to lend a finger-tip 775

To unravel, readjust the hopeless twine,

While, half-a-dozen steps outside the court,

There stood a foolish trifler with a tool

A-dangle to no purpose by his side,

Had clearly cut the tangle in a trice. 780

*Asserunt enim unanimiter*

*Doctores*, for the Doctors all assert,

at husbands, *quod mariti*, must be held  
*es, cornuti reputantur*, vile  
 d branching forth a florid infamy, 785  
*propriis manibus*, if with their own hands,  
*n sumunt*, they take not straightway revenge,  
*ndictam*, but expect the deed be done  
 the Court—*expectant illam fieri*  
*r iudices, qui summopere rident*, which 790  
 ves an enormous guffaw for reply,  
*cachinnantur*. For he ran away,  
*liquit enim*, just that he might 'scape  
 ie censure of both counsellors and crowd,  
*vulgi et Doctorum evitaret* 795  
*nsuram*, and lest so he superadd  
 loss of honour ignominy too,  
*sic ne istam quoque ignominiam*  
*misso honori superadderet*.  
 y lords, my lords, the inconsiderate step 800  
 as—we referred ourselves to law at all!  
 wit me not with, "Law else had punished you!"  
 uch punishment of the extra-legal step,  
 which the high-born preferably revert,

Is ever for some oversight, some slip  
I' the taking vengeance, not for vengeance' self.  
A good thing done unhandsomely turns ill ;  
And never yet lacked ill the law's rebuke.  
For pregnant instance, let us contemplate  
The luck of Leonardus,—see at large  
Of Sicily's Decisions sixty-first.  
This Leonard finds his wife is false : what then ?  
He makes her own son snare her, and entice  
Out of the town-walls to a private walk,  
Wherein he slays her with commodity.  
They find her body half-devoured by dogs :  
Leonard is tried, convicted, punished, sent  
To labour in the galleys seven years long :  
Why? For the murder? Nay, but for the mode !  
*Malus modus occidendi*, ruled the Court,  
An ugly mode of killing, nothing more !  
Another fructuous sample,—see “ *De Re*  
“ *Criminali*,” in Matthæus' divine piece.  
Another husband, in no better plight,  
Simulates absence, thereby tempts the wife ;  
On whom he falls, out of sly ambuscade,

brother of his, and both of them  
 e teeth with arms that law had blamed.  
 , overwilily,  
 'um, was it worked, 830  
 the law : had all been fairly done  
 t found him worthy, as she did,  
 s' exile. Why cite more ? Enough  
 . feast—(unless a birthday-feast  
 inuccio : so, we'll finish here) 835  
 e rather need defend ourselves  
 ; for a twinkling of an eye  
 ightly appealed to law,—  
 deny that, on mature advice,  
 gly bethought us, bade revenge 840  
 simple proper private way  
 elf-dealt gentlemanly death.  
 e is the law, and this beside,  
 ny ! Look to it !

Pause and breathe ! 845  
 ly too plain ; we must watch,  
 scarce hazard an attack  
 s anticipate the fellow's play,

And guard the weaker places—warily ask,  
What if considerations of a sort, 850  
Reasons of a kind, arise from out the strange  
Peculiar unforeseen new circumstance  
Of this our (candour owns) abnormal act,  
To bar the right of us revenging so?  
“ Impunity were otherwise your meed : 855  
“ Go slay your wife and welcome,”—may be urged,—  
“ But why the innocent old couple slay,  
“ Pietro, Violante? You may do enough,  
“ Not too much, not exceed the golden mean :  
“ Neither brute-beast nor Pagan, Gentile, Jew, 860  
“ Nor Christian, no nor votarist of the mode,  
“ Were free at all to push revenge so far !”

No, indeed? Why, thou very sciolist !  
The actual wrong, Pompilia seemed to do,  
Was virtual wrong done by the parents here— 865  
Imposing her upon us as their child—  
Themselves allow : then, her fault was their fault,  
Her punishment be theirs accordingly !  
But wait a little, sneak not off so soon !



Was this cheat solely harm to Guido, pray? 870  
 The precious couple you call innocent,—  
 Why, they were felons that law failed to clutch,  
*Qui ut fraudarent*, who that they might rob,  
*Legitime vocatos*, folks law called,  
*Ad fidei commissum*, true heirs to the Trust, 875  
*Partum supposuerunt*, feigned this birth,  
*Immemores reos factos esse*, blind  
 To the fact that, guilty, they incurred thereby,  
*Ultimi supplicii*, hanging or aught worse.  
 Do you blame us that we turn law's instruments 880  
 Not mere self-seekers,—mind the public weal,  
 Nor make the private good our sole concern?  
 That having—shall I say—secured a thief,  
 Not simply we recover from his pouch  
 The stolen article our property, 885  
 But also pounce upon our neighbour's purse  
 We opportunely find reposing there,  
 And do him justice while we right ourselves?  
 He owes us, for our part, a drubbing say,  
 But owes our neighbour just a dance i' the air 890  
 Under the gallows: so we throttle him.

The neighbour's Law, the couple are the Thief,  
We are the over-ready to help Law—  
Zeal of her house hath eaten us up : for which,  
Can it be, Law intends to eat up us,  
*Crudum Priamum*, devour poor Priam raw,  
('T was Jupiter's own joke) with babes to boot,  
*Priamique pisinno*, in Homeric phrase?  
Shame !——and so ends the period prettily.

But even,—prove the pair not culpable,  
Free as unborn babe from connivance at,  
Participation in, their daughter's fault :  
Ours the mistake. Is that a rare event?  
*Non semel*, it is anything but rare,  
*In contingentia facti*, that by chance,  
*Impunes evaserunt*, go scot-free,  
*Qui*, such well-meaning people as ourselves,  
*Justo dolore moti*, who aggrieved  
With cause, *apposuerunt manus*, lay  
Rough hands, *in innocentes*, on wrong heads.  
Cite we an illustrative case in point :  
*Mulier Smirnea quaedam*, good my lords,

A gentlewoman lived in Smyrna once,  
*Virum et filium ex eo conceptum*, who  
Both husband and her son begot by him, 915  
Killed, *interfecerat, ex quo*, because,  
*Vir filium suum perdiderat*, her spouse  
Had been beforehand with her, killed her son,  
*Matrimonii primi*, of a previous bed.  
*Deinde accusata*, then accused, 920  
*Apud Dolabellam*, before him that sat  
Proconsul, *nec duabus cædibus*  
*Contaminatam liberare*, nor  
To liberate a woman doubly-dyed  
With murder, *voluit*, made he up his mind, 925  
*Nec condemnare*, nor to doom to death,  
*Iusto dolore impulsam*, one impelled  
By just grief, *sed remisit*, but sent her up  
*Ad Areopagum*, to the Hill of Mars,  
*Sapientissimorum judicum* 930  
*Cætum*, to that assembly of the sage  
Paralleled only by my judges here ;  
*Ubi, cognito de causa*, where, the cause  
Well weighed, *responsum est*, they gave reply,

*Ut ipsa et accusator*, that both sides  
O' the suit, *redirent*, should come back again,  
*Post centum annos*, after a hundred years,  
For judgment ; *et sic*, by which sage decree,  
*Duplici parricidio rea*, one  
Convicted of a double parricide,  
*Quamvis etiam innocentem*, though in truth  
Out of the pair, one innocent at least  
She, *occidisset*, plainly had put to death,  
*Undequaque*, yet she altogether 'scaped,  
*Evasit impunis*. See the case at length  
In Valerius, fittingly styled *Maximus*,  
That eighth book of his Memorable Facts.  
Nor Cyriacus cites beside the mark :  
*Similiter uxor quæ mandaverat*,  
Just so, a lady who had taken care,  
*Homicidium viri*, that her lord be killed,  
*Ex denegatione debiti*,  
For denegation of a certain debt,  
*Matrimonialis*, he was loth to pay,  
*Fuit pecuniaria mulcta*, was  
Amerced in a pecuniary mulct,

*ita, et ad pœnam*, and to pains,  
*pœralem*, for a certain space of time,  
*monasterio*, in a convent.

Ay, 960

*monasterio* ! How he manages  
 with the ablative, the accusative !  
 d hoped to have hitched the villain into verse  
 a gift, this very day, a complete list  
 he prepositions each with proper case, 965  
 ing a story, long was in my head.  
 at prepositions take the accusative ?  
 o or at—*who saw the cat*?—down to  
 for, because of, *keep her claws off* ! Ah,  
 in a man takes the whole liberty ! 970  
 muse is fettered,—just as Ovid found !

now, sea widens and the coast is clear.  
 at of the dubious act you bade excuse ?  
 ly things brighten, brighten, till at length  
 rains—so far from act that needs defence— 975  
 logy to make for act delayed

One minute, let alone eight mortal months

Of hesitation! "Why procrastinate?"

(Out with it my Bottinius, ease thyself!)

"Right, promptly done, is twice right: right delayed 980

"Turns wrong. We grant you should have killed your  
wife,

"But on the moment, at the meeting her

"In company with the priest: then did the tongue

"O' the Brazen Head give licence, 'Time is now!'

"You make your mind up: 'Time is past' it peals. 985

"Friend, you are competent to mastery

"O' the passions that confessedly explain

"An outbreak,—yet allow an interval,

"And then break out as if time's clock still clanged.

"You have forfeited your chance, and flat you fall 990

"Into the commonplace category

"Of men bound to go softly all their days,

"Obeying law."

Now, which way make response?

What was the answer Guido gave, himself? 995

—That so to argue came of ignorance

' honour bears a wound : " For, wound," said he,  
 y body, and the smart is worst at first :  
 hile, wound my soul where honour sits and rules,  
 nger the sufferance, stronger grows the pain, 1000  
 is *ex incontinenti*, fresh as first."  
 try another tack, calm common sense  
 ray of contrast : as—Too true, my lords !  
 lid demur, awhile did hesitate :  
 husband sure should let a scruple speak 1005  
 he slay wife,—for his own safety, lords !  
 ers abound in this misjudging world.  
 eover, there 's a nicety in law  
 : seems to justify them should they carp :  
 ose the source of injury a son,— 1010  
 er may slay such son yet run no risk :  
 graced with such a privilege ? Because  
 ther so incensed with his own child,  
 ust have reason, or believe he has :  
 i *semper*, seeing that in such event, 1015  
 igitur, the law is bound suppose,  
 i *capiat pater*, that the sire must take,  
 um *consilium pro filio*,

The best course as to what befits his boy,  
Through instinct, *ex instinctu*, of mere love, 1020  
*Amoris*, and, *paterni*, fatherhood ;  
*Quam confidentiam*, which confidence,  
*Non habet*, law declines to entertain,  
*De viro*, of the husband : where has he  
An instinct that compels him love his wife ? 1025  
Rather is he presumably her foe :  
So, let him ponder long in this bad world  
Ere do the simplest act of justice.

But

Again—and here we brush Bottini's breast— 1030  
Object you, "See the danger of delay !  
" Suppose a man murdered my friend last month :  
" Had I come up and killed him for his pains  
" In rage, I had done right, allows the law :  
" I meet him now and kill him in cold blood, 1035  
" I do wrong, equally allows the law :  
" Wherein do actions differ, yours and mine ?"  
*In plenitudine intellectus es ?*  
Hast thy wits, Fisc ? To take such slayer's life,



eturns it life to thy slain friend at all ? 1040

lad he stolen ring instead of stabbing friend,—

'o-day, to-morrow or next century,

feeting the thief, thy ring upon his thumb,

'hou justifiably hadst wrung it thence :

o, couldst thou wrench thy friend's life back again,

hough prisoned in the bosom of his foe, 1046

thy, law would look complacent on thy rush.

ur case is, that the thing we lost, we found :

re honour, we were robbed of eight months since,

ing recoverable at any day 1050

' death of the delinquent. Go thy ways !

e thou hast learned law, will be much to do,

said the rustic while he shod the goose.

y, if you urge me, interval was none !

om the inn to the villa—blank or else a bar 1055

adverse and contrarious incident

lid between us and our just revenge !

at with the priest who flourishes his blade,

e wife who like a fury flings at us,

e crowd—and then the capture, the appeal 1060

To Rome, the journey there, the journey thence,  
The shelter at the House of Convertites,  
The visits to the Villa, and so forth,  
Where was one minute left us all this while  
To put in execution that revenge 1065  
We planned o' the instant?—as it were, plumped down  
A round sound egg, o' the spot, some eight months since,  
Rome, more propitious than our nest, should hatch!  
Object not, "You reached Rome on Christmas-eve,  
" And, despite liberty to act at once, 1070  
" Waited a week—indecorous delay!"  
Hath so the Molinism-canker, lords,  
Eaten to the bone? Is no religion left?  
No care for aught held holy by the Church?  
What, would you have us skip and miss those Feasts  
O' the Natal Time, must we go prosecute 1076  
Secular business on a sacred day?  
Should not the merest charity expect,  
Setting our poor concerns aside for once,  
We hurried to the song matutinal 1080  
I' the Sistine, and pressed forward for the Mass  
The Cardinal that 's Camerlengo chaunts,

Then rushed on to the blessing of the Hat  
And Rapier, which the Pope sends to what prince  
Has done most detriment to the Infidel— 1085  
And thereby whet our courage if 't were blunt ?  
Meantime, allow we kept the house a week;  
Suppose not we were idle in our mew :  
Picture Count Guido raging here and there—  
“ ‘ Money ? ’ I need none—‘ Friends ? ’ The word is null.  
“ Match me the white was on that shield of mine 1091  
“ Borne at ” . . wherever might be shield to bear ;  
“ I see my grandsire, he who fought so well  
“ At ” . . here find out and put in time and place  
Of what might be a fight his grandsire fought : 1095  
‘ I see this—I see that—’

See to it all,  
Or I shall scarce see lamb’s fry in an hour !  
—Nod to the uncle, as I bid advance  
The smoking dish, “ This, for your tender teeth ! 1100  
‘ Behoves us care a little for our kin—  
‘ You, Sir,—who care so much for cousinship  
‘ As come to your poor loving nephew’s feast ! ”

He has the reversion of a long lease yet—  
Land to bequeath! He loves lamb's fry, I know! 1105

Here fall to be considered those same six  
Qualities ; what Bottini needs must call  
So many aggravations of our crime,  
Parasite-growth upon mere murder's back.  
We summarily might dispose of such 1110  
By some off-hand and jaunty fling, some skit—  
“ So, since there's proved no crime to aggravate,  
“ A fico for your aggravations, Fisc !”  
No,—handle mischief rather,—play with spells  
Were meant to raise a spirit, and laugh the while 1115  
We show that did he rise we are his match !  
Therefore, first aggravation : we made up—  
Over and above our simple murdering selves—  
A regular assemblage of armed men,  
*Coadunatio armatorum*,—ay, 1120  
Unluckily it was the very judge  
Who sits in judgment on our cause to-day  
That passed the law as Governor of Rome :  
Four men armed,”—though for lawful purpose, mark !

more for an acknowledged crime,—“ shall die.”  
we were armed to the teeth, meant murder too?  
that ’s the very point that saves us, Fisc ! 1127  
ne instruct you. Crime nor done nor meant,—  
punish still who arm and congregate :  
why have used bad means to a good end? 1130  
e being meant not done,—you punish still  
means to crime, you haply pounce upon,  
ugh circumstance have baulked you of their end :  
crime not only compassed but complete,  
it and done too? Why, since you have the end,  
at your sole concern, nor mind those means 1136  
onger to the purpose ! Murdered we ?  
’hich, that our luck was in the present case,  
*l contigisse in præsentî casu,*  
lpable, *manibus palpatum est*—) 1140  
e murder out against us, nothing less !  
any crimes committed with a view  
ne main crime, you overlook the less,  
it upon the large. Suppose a man  
ing in view commission of a theft, 1145  
b the town-wall : ’t is for the theft he hangs,

Suppose you can convict him of such theft,  
Remitted whipping due to who climbs wall  
For bravery or wantonness alone,  
Just to dislodge a daw's nest and no more. 1150

So I interpret you the manly mind  
Of him the Judge shall judge both you and me,—  
O' the Governor, who, being no babe, my Fisc,  
Cannot have blundered on ineptitude !

Next aggravation,—that the arms themselves 1155  
Were specially of such forbidden sort  
Through shape or length or breadth, as, prompt, law  
plucks

From single hand of solitary man,  
And makes him pay the carriage with his life :

*Delatio armorum*, arms against the rule, 1160

*Contra formam constitutionis*, of

Pope Alexander's blessed memory.

Such are the poignard with the double prong,  
Horn-like, when tines make bold the antlered buck,  
And all of brittle glass—for man to stab 1165  
And break off short and so let fragment stick

Fast in the flesh to baffle surgery :  
 And such the Genoese blade with hooks at edge  
 That did us service at the Villa here.  
*Sed parcat mihi tam eximius vir,* 1170  
 But, let so rare a personage forgive,  
 Fisc, thy objection is a foppery !  
 Thy charge runs, that we killed three innocents :  
 Killed, dost see? Then, if killed, what matter how?—  
 By stick or stone, by sword or dagger, tool 1175  
 Long or tool short, round or triangular—  
 Poor folks, they find small comfort in a choice !  
 Means to an end, means to an end, my Fisc !  
 Nature cries out " Take the first arms you find !"  
*Furor ministrat arma :* where 's a stone ? 1180  
*Inde mi lapidem,* where darts for me ?  
*Inde sagittas ?* But subdue the bard  
 And rationalize a little : eight months since,  
 Had we, or had we not, incurred your blame  
 'Or letting 'scape unpunished this bad pair ? 1185  
 think I proved that in last paragraph !  
 Why did we so ? Because our courage failed.  
 Therefore ? Through lack of arms to fight the foe :

We had no arms or merely lawful ones,  
An unimportant sword and blunderbuss, 1190  
Against a foe, pollent in potency,  
The *amasius*, and our vixen of a wife.  
Well then, how culpably do we gird loin  
And once more undertake the high emprise,  
Unless we load ourselves this second time 1195  
With handsome superfluity of arms,  
Since better say "too much" than "not enough,"  
And "*plus non vitiat*," too much does no harm,  
Except in mathematics, sages say.  
Gather instruction from the parable ! 1200  
At first we are advised—"A lad hath here  
"Seven barley loaves and two small fishes : what  
"Is that among so many?" Aptly asked :  
But put that question twice and, quite as apt  
The answer is "Fragments, twelve baskets full !" 1205

And, while we speak of superabundance, fling  
A word by the way to fools that cast their flout  
On Guido—"Punishment exceeds offence :  
"You might be just but you were cruel too !"



'so you stigmatise the stern and strict, 1210  
 ill, he is not without excuse—may plead  
 transgression of his mandate, over-zeal  
 ' the part of his companions : all he craved  
 'as, they should fray the faces of the three :  
*olummodo fassus est*, he owns no more, 1215  
*dedisse mandatum*, than that he desired,  
*id sfrisiandum, dicam*, that they hack  
 and hew, i' the customary phrase, his wife,  
*noxorem tantum*, and no harm beside.  
 'his instructions then be misconceived, 1220  
 lay, disobeyed, impute you blame to him ?  
 'ite me no Panicollus to the point,  
 as adverse ! Oh, I quite expect his case—  
 How certain noble youths of Sicily  
 having good reason to mistrust their wives, 1225  
 killed them and were absolved in consequence :  
 While others who had gone beyond the need  
 by mutilation of the paramour  
 So Galba in the Horatian satire grieved)  
 —These were condemned to the galleys, as for guilt  
 Exceeding simple murder of a wife. 1231

But why? Because of ugliness, and not  
Cruelty, in the said revenge, I trow !

*Ex causa abscissionis partium ;*

*Quia nempe id facientes reputantur* 1235

*Naturæ inimici*, man revolts

Against such as the natural enemy.

Pray, grant to one who meant to slit the nose  
And slash the cheek and slur the mouth, at most,

A somewhat more humane award than these ! 1240

*Objectum funditus corrui*t, flat you fall,

My Fisc ! I waste no kick on you but pass.

Third aggravation : that our act was done—

Not in the public street, where safety lies,

Not in the bye-place, caution may avoid, 1245

Wood, cavern, desert, spots contrived for crime,—

But in the very house, home, nook and nest,

O' the victims, murdered in their dwelling-place,

*In domo ac habitatione propria*,

Where all presumably is peace and joy. 1250

The spider, crime, pronounce we twice a pest

When, creeping from congenial cottage, she

Taketh hold with her hands, to horrify  
His household more, i' the palace of the king.  
All three were housed and safe and confident. 1255  
Moreover, the permission that our wife  
Should have at length *domum pro carcere*,  
Her own abode in place of prison—why,  
We ourselves granted, by our other self  
And proxy Paolo : did we make such grant, 1260  
Meaning a lure ?—elude the vigilance  
O' the jailor, lead her to commodious death,  
While we ostensibly relented ?

Ay,

Just so did we, nor otherwise, my Fisc ! 1265  
Is vengeance lawful ? We demand our right,  
But find it will be questioned or refused  
By jailor, turnkey, hangdog,—what know we ?  
Pray, how is it we should conduct ourselves ?  
To gain our private right—break public peace, 1270  
Do you bid us ?—trouble order with our broils ?  
Endanger . . shall I shrink to own . . ourselves ?—  
Who want no broken head nor bloody nose  
(While busied slitting noses, breaking heads)

From the first tipstaff shall please interfere !

*Nam quicquid sit*, for howsoever it be,

*An de consensu nostro*, if with leave

Or not, *a monasterio*, from the nuns,

*Educta esset*, she had been led forth,

*Potuiamus id dissimulare*, we

May well have granted leave in pure pretence,

*Ut aditum habere*, that thereby

An entry we might compass, a free move

*Potuissemus*, to her easy death,

*Ad eam occidendam*. Privacy

O' the hearth, and sanctitude of home, say you ?

Would you give man's abode more privilege

Than God's ?—for in the churches where He dwell

*In quibus assistit Regum Rex*, by means

Of His essence, *per essentiam*, all the same,

*Et nihilominus*, therein, *in eis*,

*Ex justa via delinquens*, whoso dares

To take a liberty on ground enough,

Is pardoned, *excusatur* : that's our case—

Delinquent through befitting cause. You hold,

To punish a false wife in her own house

Is graver than, what happens every day,  
To hale a debtor from his hiding-place  
In church protected by the Sacrament?  
To this conclusion have I brought my Fisc? 1300  
Foxes have holes, and fowls o' the air their nests;  
Praise you the impiety that follows, Fisc?  
Shall false wife yet have where to lay her head?  
" *Contra Fiscum definitum est!*" He's done,  
" *Surge et scribe,*" make a note of it! 1305  
—If I may dally with Aquinas' word.

Or in the death-throe does he mutter still?  
Fourth aggravation, that we changed our garb,  
And rusticized ourselves with uncouth hat,  
Rough vest and goatskin wrappage; murdered thus  
*Mutatione vestium*, in disguise, 1311  
Whereby mere murder got complexed with wile,  
Turned *homicidium ex insidiis*. Fisc,  
How often must I round thee in the ears—  
All means are lawful to a lawful end? 1315  
Concede he had the right to kill his wife:  
The Count indulged in a travesty; why?

*De illa ut vindictam sumeret,*

That on her he might lawful vengeance take,

*Commodus*, with more ease, *et tutius*,

And safer : wants he warrant for the step ?

Read to thy profit how the Apostle once

For ease and safety, when Damascus raged,

Was let down in a basket by the wall,

To 'scape the malice of the governor

(Another sort of Governor boasts Rome !)

—Many are of opinion,—covered close,

Concealed with—what except that very cloak

He left behind at Troas afterward ?

I shall not add a syllable : Molinists may !

Well, have we more to manage ? Ay, indeed !

Fifth aggravation, that our wife reposed

*Sub potestate judicis*, beneath


Protection of the judge,—her house was styled

A prison, and his power became its guard

In lieu of wall and gate and bolt and bar.

This a tough point, shrewd, redoubtable :

Because we have to supplicate the judge !



Shall overlook wrong done the judgment-seat.  
Now, I might suffer my own nose be pulled, 1340  
As man—but then as father . . if the Fisc  
Touched one hair of my boy who held my hand  
In confidence he could not come to harm  
Crossing the Corso, at my own desire,  
Going to see those bodies in the church— 1345  
What would you say to that, Don Hyacinth?  
This is the sole and single knotty point :  
For, bid Tommati blink his interest,  
You laud his magnanimity the while :  
But baulk Tommati's office,—he talks big ! 1350  
“ My predecessors in the place,—those sons  
“ O' the prophets that may hope succeed me here,—  
“ Shall I diminish their prerogative?  
“ Count Guido Franceschini's honour !—well,  
“ Has the Governor of Rome none ?” 1355

You perceive,

The cards are all against us. Make a push,  
Kick over table, as our gamesters do !  
We, do you say, encroach upon the rights,

Deny the omnipotence o' the Judge forsooth ? 1360  
We, who have only been from first to last  
Intent on that his purpose should prevail,  
Nay, more, at times, anticipating both  
At risk of a rebuke ?

But wait awhile ! 1365  
Cannot we lump this with the sixth and last  
Of the aggravations—that the Majesty  
O' the Sovereign here received a wound, to-wit,  
*Læsa Majestas*, since our violence  
Was out of envy to the course of law, 1370  
*In odium litis* ? We cut short thereby  
Three pending suits, promoted by ourselves  
I' the main,—which worsens crime, *accedit ad*  
*Exasperationem criminis* !

Yes, here the eruptive wrath with full effect ! 1375  
How—did not indignation chain my tongue—  
Could I repel this last, worst charge of all !  
(There is a porcupine to barbacue ;  
Gigia can jug a rabbit well enough,



sour-sweet sauce and pine-pips ; but, good  
Lord, 1380  
lose the devil instigate the wench  
tew, not roast him ? Stew my porcupine ?  
e does, I know where his quills shall stick !  
e, I must go myself and see to things :  
not stay much longer stewing here) 1385  
stomach . . I mean, our soul—is stirred within,  
we want words. We wounded Majesty ?  
under such a censure, we,—who yearned  
much that Majesty dispel the cloud  
shine on us with healing on its wings, 1390  
prayed the Pope, *Majestas'* very self,  
anticipate a little the tardy pack,  
us forth deep the authoritative bay  
ld start the beagles into sudden yelp  
onous,—and, Gospel leading Law, 1395  
t there assemble in our own behoof  
ongregation, a particular Court,  
w picked friends of quality and place,  
ear the several matters in dispute,  
es big, little and indifferent, 1400

Bred of our marriage like a mushroom-growth,  
All at once (can one brush off such too soon ?)  
And so with laudable dispatch decide  
Whether we, in the main (to sink detail)  
Were one the Church should hold fast or let go. 1405  
“ What, take the credit from the Law ? ” you ask ?  
Indeed, we did ! Law ducks to Gospel here :  
Why should Law gain the glory and pronounce  
A judgment shall immortalize the Pope ?  
Yes : our self-abnegating policy 1410  
Was Joab’s—we would rouse our David’s sloth,  
Bid him encamp against a city, sack  
A place whereto ourselves had long laid siege,  
Lest, taking it at last, it take our name  
And be not *Innocentinopolis*. 1415  
But no ! The modesty was in alarm,  
The temperance refused to interfere,  
Returned us our petition with the word  
“ *Ad iudices suos*, ” “ Leave him to his Judge ! ”  
As who should say—“ Why trouble my repose ? ” 1420  
“ Why consult Peter in a simple case,  
“ Peter’s wife’s sister in her fever-fit

" Might solve as readily as the Apostle's self?  
" Are my Tribunals posed by aught so plain?  
" Hath not my Court a conscience? It is of age, 1425  
" Ask it ! "

                  We do ask,—but, inspire reply  
To the Court thou bidst me ask, as I have asked—  
Oh thou, who vigilantly dost attend  
To even the few, the ineffectual words 1430  
Which rise from this our low and mundane sphere  
Up to thy region out of smoke and noise,  
Seeking corroboration from thy nod  
Who art all justice—which means mercy too,  
In a low noisy smoky world like ours 1435  
Where Adam's sin made peccable his seed !  
We venerate the father of the flock,  
Whose last faint sands of life, the frittered gold,  
Fall noiselessly, yet all too fast, o' the cone  
And tapering heap of those collected years,— 1440  
Never have these been hurried in their flow,  
Though justice fain would jog reluctant arm,  
In eagerness to take the forfeiture

Of guilty life : much less shall mercy sue  
In vain that thou let innocence survive, 1445  
Precipitate no minim of the mass  
O' the all-so precious moments of thy life,  
By pushing Guido into death and doom !

(Our Cardinal engages read my speech :  
They say, the Pope has one half-hour, in twelve, 1450  
Of something like a moderate return  
Of the intellectuals,—never much to lose !—  
If I adroitly plant this passage there,  
The Fisc will find himself forestalled, I think,  
Though he stand, beat till the old ear-drum break ! 1455  
—Ah, boy of my own bowels, Hyacinth,  
Wilt ever catch the knack,—requite the pains  
Of poor papa, become proficient too  
I' the how and why and when—the time to laugh,  
The time to weep, the time, again, to pray, 1460  
And all the times prescribed by Holy Writ ?  
Well, well, we fathers can but care, but cast  
Our bread upon the waters !)

In a word,

These secondary charges go to ground, 1465

Since secondary, so superfluous,—motes

Quite from the main point : we did all and some,

Little and much, adjunct and principal,

*Causa honoris.* Is there such a cause

As the sake of honour ? By that sole test try 1470

Our action, nor demand if more or less,

Because of the action's mode, we merit blame

Or may-be deserve praise. The Court decides.

Is the end lawful ? It allows the means :

What we may do we may with safety do, 1475

And what means " safety " we ourselves must judge.

Put case a person wrongs me past dispute :

If my legitimate vengeance be a blow,

Mistrusting my bare arm can deal the same,

I claim co-operation of a stick ; 1480

Doubtful if stick be tough, I crave a sword ;

Diffident of ability in fence,

I fee a friend, a swordsman to assist :

Take one—who may be coward, fool or knave—

Why not take fifty ?—and if these exceed 1485

I' the due degree of drubbing, whom accuse

But the first author of the aforesaid wrong  
Who put poor me to such a world of pains?  
Surgery would have just excised a wart;  
The patient made such pothor, struggled so 1490  
That the sharp instrument sliced nose and all.  
Taunt us not that our friends performed for pay!  
For us, enough were simple honour's sake:  
Give country clowns the dirt they comprehend,  
The piece of gold! Our reasons, which suffice 1495  
Ourselves, be ours alone; our piece of gold  
Be, to the rustic, reason and to spare!  
We must translate our motives like our speech  
Into the lower phrase that suits the sense  
O' the limitedly apprehensive. Let 1500  
Each level have its language! Heaven speaks first  
To the angel, then the angel tames the word  
Down to the ear of Tobit: he, in turn,  
Diminishes the message to his dog,  
And finally that dog finds how the flea 1505  
(Which else, importunate, might check his speed)  
Shall learn its hunger must have holiday,—  
How many varied sorts of language here,

ch following each with pace to match the step,  
*ad passibus æquis !* 1510

Talking of which flea  
 minds me I must put in special word  
 r the poor humble following,—the four friends,  
*arii*, our assassins in your charge.  
 rselves are safe in your approval now : 1515  
 t must we care for our companions, plead  
 e cause o' the poor, the friends (of old-world faith)  
 10 are in tribulation for our sake.  
*uperum Procurator* is my style :  
 tand forth as the poor man's advocate : 1520  
 id when we treat of what concerns the poor,  
 ' *cum agatur de pauperibus*,  
 bondage, *carceratis*, for their sake,  
*eorum causis*, natural piety,  
*etas*, ever ought to win the day, 1525  
*riumphare debet, quia ipsi sunt*,  
 xause those very paupers constitute,  
*hesaurus Christi*, all the wealth of Christ.  
 evertheless I shall not hold you long

With multiplicity of proofs, nor burn 1530  
Candle at noon-tide, clarify the clear.  
There beams a case refulgent from our books—  
Castrensis, Butringarius, everywhere  
I find it burn to dissipate the dark.  
'T is this : a husband had a friend, which friend 1535  
Seemed to him over-friendly with his wife  
In thought and purpose,—I pretend no more.  
To justify suspicion or dispel,  
He bids his wife make show of giving heed,  
Semblance of sympathy—propose, in fine, 1540  
A secret meeting in a private place.  
The friend, enticed thus, finds an ambuscade,  
To-wit, the husband posted with a pack  
Of other friends, who fall upon the first  
And beat his love and life out both at once. 1545  
These friends were brought to question for their help.  
Law ruled “ The husband being in the right,  
“ Who helped him in the right can scarce be wrong ”—  
*Opinio*, an opinion every way,  
*Multum tenenda cordi*, heart should hold ! 1550  
When the inferiors follow as befits



: lead o' the principal, they change their name,  
 l, *non dicuntur*, are no longer called  
 mandatories, *mandatorii*,  
 helpmates, *sed auxiliares*; since 1555  
 that degree does honour' sake lend aid,  
*o honoris causa est efficax*,  
 it not alone, *non solum*, does it pour  
 :lf out, *se diffundat*, on mere friends,  
 bring to do our bidding of this sort, 1560  
*mandatorios simplices*, but sucks  
 ng with it in wide and generous whirl,  
*etiam assassinii qualitate*  
*ustificatos*, people qualified  
 the quality of assassination's self, 1565  
 re I make use of such neologism,  
*utar verbo*.

Haste we to conclude :

the other points that favour, leave some few  
 : Spreti; such as the delinquents' youth : 1570  
 e of them falls short, by some months, of age  
 : to be managed by the gallows; two

May plead exemption from our law's award,  
Being foreigners, subjects of the Granduke—  
I spare that bone to Spreti and reserve  
Myself the juicier breast of argument—  
Flinging the breast-blade i' the face o' the Fisc,  
Who furnished me the tid-bit : he must needs  
Play off his armoury and rack the clowns,—  
And they, at instance of the rack, confessed  
All four unanimously did resolve,—  
That night o' the murder, in brief minutes snatched  
Behind the back of Guido as he fled,—  
That, since he had not kept his promise, paid  
The money for the murder on the spot,  
And, reaching home again, might even ignore  
The past or pay it in improper coin,  
They one and all resolved, these hopeful friends,  
They would inaugurate the morrow's light,  
Having recruited strength with needful rest,  
By killing Guido as he lay asleep  
Pillowed by wallet which contained their fee.

I thank the Fisc for knowledge of this fact :

MIDUS HYACINTHUS DE ANGLIA

147

could hope to make new master

trade. Gaido's integrity

148

his recognise appear

poor friends

yet

the people

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By money dug out of the dirty earth,  
Mere irritant, in Maro's phrase, to ill ?  
What though he lured base hinds by lucre's hope,—  
The only motive they could masticate, 1619  
Milk for babes, not strong meat which men require ?  
The deed done, those coarse hands were soiled enough.  
He spared them the pollution of the pay.  
So much for the allegement, thine, my Fisc,  
*Quo nil absurdius*, than which nought more mad,  
*Excogitari potest*, may be squeezed 1623  
From out the cogitative brain of thee !

And now, thou excellent the Governor !  
(Push to the peroration) *cæterum*  
*Enixe supplico*, I strive in prayer,  
*Ut dominis meis*, that unto the Court, 1629  
*Benigna fronte*, with a gracious brow,  
*Et oculis serenis*, and mild eyes,  
*Perpendere placeat*, it may please them weigh,  
*Quod dominus Guido*, that our noble Count,  
*Occidit*, did the killing in dispute, 1633  
*Ut ejus honor tumultatus*, that

The honour of him buried fathom-deep  
In infamy, *in infamia*, might arise,  
*Resurgeret*, as ghosts break sepulchre !  
*Occidit*, for he killed, *uxorem*, wife, 1640  
*Quia illi fuit*, since she was to him,  
*Opprobrio*, a disgrace and nothing more !  
*Et genitores*, killed her parents too,  
*Qui*, who, *postposita verecundia*,  
Having thrown off all sort of decency, 1645  
*Filiam repudiarunt*, had renounced  
Their daughter, *atque declarare non*  
*Erubuerunt*, nor felt blush tinge cheek,  
Declaring, *meretricis genitam*  
*Esse*, she was the offspring of a drab, 1650  
*Ut ipse dehonestaretur*, just  
That so himself might lose his social rank !  
*Cujus mentem*, and which daughter's heart and soul,  
They, *perverterunt*, turned from the right course,  
*Et ad illicitos amores non* 1655  
*Dumtaxat pellecerunt*, and to love  
Not simply did alluringly incite,  
*Sed vi obedientiæ*, but by force

O' the duty, *filialis*, daughters owe,  
*Coegerunt*, forced and drove her to the deed : 1660  
*Occidit*, I repeat he killed the clan,  
*Ne scilicet amplius in dedecore*,  
Lest peradventure longer life might trail,  
*Viveret*, link by link his turpitude,  
*Invisus consanguineis*, hateful so 1665  
To kith and kindred, *a nobilibus*  
*Notatus*, shunned by men of quality,  
*Relictus ab amicis*, left i' the lurch  
By friends, *ab omnibus derisus*, turned  
A common hack-block to try edge of jokes. 1670  
*Occidit*, and he killed them here in Rome,  
*In Urbe*, the Eternal City, Sirs,  
*Nempe quæ alias spectata est*,  
The appropriate theatre which witnessed once,  
*Matronam nobilem*, Lucretia's self, 1675  
*Abluere pudicitiae maculas*,  
Wash off the spots of her pudicity,  
*Sanguine proprio*, with her own pure blood ;  
*Quæ vidit*, and which city also saw,  
*Patrem*, Virginius, *undequaque*, quite, 1680

rem, with no sort of punishment,  
et non illaudatum, lacking praise,  
illuentem parricidio,  
ie his hands with butchery, filia,  
aste Virginia, to avoid a rape, 1685  
peretur ad stupra ; so to heart,  
illi cordi fuit, did he take,  
io, the mere fancy men might have,  
is amittendi, of fame's loss,  
tius voluerit filia 1690  
i, that he chose to lose his child,  
illa incederet, rather than she walk  
rays an, inhonesta, child disgraced,  
non sponte, though against her will.  
t—killed them, I reiterate— 1695  
pria domo, in their own abode,  
ultera et parentes, that each wretch,  
i agnoscerent, might both see and say,  
m locum, there's no place, nullumque esse  
m, nor yet refuge of escape, 1700  
etabilem, shall serve as bar,  
i lesso, to the wounded one

---

In honour ; *neve ibi opprobria*

*Continuarentur*, killed them on the spot

Moreover, dreading lest within those walls 1705

The opprobrium peradventure be prolonged,

*Et domus quæ testis fuit turpium,*

And that the domicile which witnessed crime,

*Esset et pœnæ*, might watch punishment :

*Occidit*, killed, I round you in the ears, 1710

*Quia alio modo*, since by other mode,

*Non poterat ejus existimatio,*

There was no possibility his fame,

*Læsa*, gashed griesly, *tam enormiter*,

*Ducere cicatrices*, might be healed : 1715

*Occidit ut exemplum præberet*

*Uxoribus*, killed her so to lesson wives

*Jura conjugii*, that the marriage-oath,

*Esse servanda*, must be kept henceforth :

*Occidit denique*, killed her, in a word, 1720

*Ut pro posse honestus viveret,*

That he, please God, might creditably live,

*Sin minus*, but if fate willed otherwise,

*Proprii honoris*, of his outraged fame,



*Offensi*, by Mannaja, if you please, 1725  
*Commiseranda victima caderet*,  
The pitiable victim he should fall !

Done ! I' the rough, i' the rough ! But done ! And, lo,  
Landed and stranded lies my very own,  
My miracle, my monster of defence— 1730  
Leviathan into the nose whereof  
I have put fish-hook, pierced his jaw with thorn,  
And given him to my maidens for a play !  
I' the rough,—to-morrow I review my piece,  
Tame here and there undue floridity,— 1735  
It's hard : you have to plead before these priests  
And poke at them with Scripture, or you pass  
For heathen and, what's worse, for ignorant  
O' the quality o' the Court and what it likes  
By way of illustration of the law : 1740  
To-morrow stick in this, and throw out that,  
And, having first ecclesiasticized,  
Regularize the whole, next emphasize,  
Then latinize and lastly Cicero-ize,  
Giving my Fisc his finish. There's my speech— 1745

And where's my fry, and family and friends?  
Where's that old Hyacinth I mean to hug  
Till he cries out, "*Jam satis!* Let me breathe!"  
Oh, what an evening have I earned to-day!  
Hail, ye true pleasures, all the rest are false!  
Oh, the old mother, oh, the fattish wife!  
Rogue Hyacinth shall put on paper toque,  
And wrap himself around with mamma's veil  
Done up to imitate papa's black robe,  
(I 'm in the secret of the comedy,—  
Part of the program leaked out long ago!)  
And call himself the Advocate o' the Poor,  
Mimic Don father that defends the Count,  
And for reward shall have a small full glass  
Of manly red rosolio to himself,  
—Always provided that he conjugate  
*Bibo*, I drink, correctly—nor be found  
Make the *perfectum*, *bipsi*, as last year!  
How the ambitious do so harden heart  
As lightly hold by these home-sanctitudes,  
To me is matter of bewilderment—  
Bewilderment! Because ambition's range

owise tethered by domestic tie :  
I refused an outlet from my home  
he world's stage?—whereon a man should play  
man in public, vigilant for law, 1771  
ous for truth, a credit to his kind,  
,—through the talent so employed as yield  
Lord his own again with usury,—  
tisfaction, yea, to God Himself! 1775  
l, I have modelled me by Agur's wish,  
emove far from me vanity and lies,  
eed me with food convenient for me!" What  
e world should a wise man require beyond?  
I but coax the good fat little wife 1780  
tell her fool of a father of the prank  
scapegrace nephew played this time last year  
Carnival,—he could not choose, I think,  
modify that inconsiderate gift  
he cup and cover (somewhere in the will 1785  
der the pillow, someone seems to guess)  
orrect that clause in favour of a boy  
e trifle ought to grace with name engraved  
ould look so well produced in years to come

To pledge a memory when poor papa  
Latin and law are long since laid at rest)  
*Hyacintho dono dedit avus,—why,*  
The wife should get a necklace for her pains,  
The very pearls that made Violante proud,  
And Pietro pawned for half their value once,—  
Redeemable by somebody—*ne sit*  
*Marita quæ rotundioribus*  
*Onusta mammis. . . baccis ambulet,*  
Her bosom shall display the big round balls,  
No braver should be borne by wedded wife !  
With which Horatian promise I conclude.  
Into the pigeon-hole with thee, my speech !  
Off and away, first work then play, play, play !  
Bottini, burn your books, you blazing ass !  
Sing “ Tra-la-la, for, lambkins, we must live ! ”

IX.

JURIS DOCTOR JOHANNES-  
BAPTISTA BOTTINIUS,

FISCI ET REV. CAM. APOSTOL. ADVOCATUS.

HAD I God's leave, how I would alter things !

If I might read instead of print my speech,—

Ay, and enliven speech with many a flower

Refuses obstinately blow in print

As wildings planted in a prim parterre,—

5

This scurvy room were turned an immense hall ;

Opposite, fifty judges in a row ;

This side and that of me, for audience—Rome :

And, where yon window is, the Pope should be—

Watch, curtained, but yet visibly enough.

10

A buzz of expectation ! Through the crowd,  
Jingling his chain and stumping with his staff,  
Up comes an usher, louts him low, " The Court  
" Requires the allocution of the Fisc ! "

I rise, I bend, I look about me, pause 15  
O'er the hushed multitude : I count—One, two—

---

Have ye seen, Judges, have ye, lights of law,—  
When it may hap some painter, much in vogue  
Throughout our city nutritive of arts,  
Ye summon to a task shall test his worth, 20  
And manufacture, as he knows and can,  
A work may decorate a palace-wall,  
Afford my lords their Holy Family,—  
Hath it escaped the acumen of the Court  
How such a painter sets himself to paint ? 25  
Suppose that Joseph, Mary and her Babe  
A-journeying to Egypt prove the piece :  
Why, first he sedulously practiseth,  
This painter,—girding loin and lighting lamp,—

On what may nourish eye, make facile hand ; 30  
 Getteth him studies (styled by draughtsmen so)  
 From some assistant corpse of Jew or Turk  
 Or, haply, Molinist, he cuts and carves,—  
 This Luca or this Carlo or the like :  
 To him the bones their inmost secret yield, 35  
 Each notch and nodule signify their use,  
 On him the muscles turn, in triple tier,  
 And pleasantly entreat the entrusted man,—  
 “ Familiarize thee with our play that lifts  
 “ Thus, and thus lowers again, leg, arm and foot !” 40  
 —Ensuring due correctness in the nude.  
 Which done, is all done ? Not a whit, ye know !  
 He,—to art’s surface rising from her depth,—  
 If some flax-poll’d soft-bearded sire be found,  
 May simulate a Joseph, (happy chance !) 45  
 Limneth exact each wrinkle of the brow,  
 Loseth no involution, cheek or chap,  
 Till lo, in black and white, the senior lives !  
 Is it a young and comely peasant-nurse  
 That poseth ? (be the phrase accorded me !) 50  
 Each feminine delight of florid lip,

Eyes brimming o'er and brow bowed down with love,  
Marmoreal neck and bosom uberous,—  
Glad on the paper in a trice they go  
To help his notion of the Mother-Maid :  
Methinks I see it, chalk a little stumped !  
Yea and her babe—that flexure of soft limbs,  
That budding face imbued with dewy sleep,  
Contribute each an excellence to Christ.  
Nay, since he humbly lent companionship,  
Even the poor ass, unpannied and elate  
Stands, perks an ear up, he a model too ;  
While clouted shoon, staff, scrip and water-gourd,—  
Aught may betoken travel, heat and haste,—  
No jot nor tittle of these but in its turn  
Ministers to perfection of the piece :  
Till now, such piece before him, part by part,—  
Such prelude ended,—pause our painter may,  
Submit his fifty studies one by one,  
And in some sort boast “ I have served my lords.”

But what? And hath he painted once this while?  
Or when ye cry “ Produce the thing required,



" Show us our picture shall rejoice its niche,  
 " Thy Journey through the Desert done in oils !"—  
 What, doth he fall to shuffling 'mid his sheets, 75  
 Fumbling for first this, then the other fact  
 Consigned to paper,—“ studies,” bear the term !—  
 And stretch a canvas, mix a pot of paste,  
 And fasten here a head and there a tail,  
 (The ass hath one, my Judges !) so dove-tail 80  
 Or, rather, ass-tail in, piece sorrily out—  
 By bits of reproduction of the life—  
 The picture, the expected Family ?  
 I trow not ! do I miss with my conceit  
 The mark, my lords ?—not so my lords were served ! 85  
 Rather your artist turns abrupt from these,  
 And preferably buries him and broods  
 (Quite away from aught vulgar and extern)  
 On the inner spectrum, filtered through the eye,  
 His brain-deposit, bred of many a drop, 90  
*E pluribus unum* : and the wiser he !  
 For in that brain,—their fancy sees at work,  
 Could my lords peep indulged,—results alone,  
 Not processes which nourish the result,

Would they discover and appreciate,—life  
Fed by digestion, not raw food itself,  
No gobbets but smooth comfortable chyme  
Secreted from each snapped-up crudity,—  
Less distinct, part by part, but in the whole  
Truer to the subject,—the main central truth  
And soul o' the picture, would my Judges spy,—  
Not those mere fragmentary studied facts  
Which answer to the outward frame and flesh—  
Not this nose, not that eyebrow, the other fact  
Of man's staff, woman's stole or infant's clout,  
But lo, a spirit-birth conceived of flesh,  
Truth rare and real, not transcripts, fact and false.  
The studies—for his pupils and himself !  
The picture be for our eximious Rome  
And—who knows?—satisfy its Governor,  
Whose new wing to the villa he hath bought  
(God give him joy of it) by Capena, soon  
('T is bruited) shall be glowing with the brush  
Of who hath long surpassed the Florentine,  
The Urbinate and . . what if I dared add,  
Even his master, yea the Cortonese,—

mean the accomplished *Ciro Ferri*, *Sirs* !  
 —Did not he die ? I'll see before I print.)


And we exordium, *Phœbus* plucks my ear !  
 Thus then, just so and no whit otherwise, 120  
 Have I,—engaged as I were *Ciro's* self,  
 To paint a parallel, a Family,  
 The patriarch *Pietro* with his wise old wife  
 To boot (as if one introduced *Saint Anne*  
 By bold conjecture to complete the group) 125  
 And juvenile *Pompilia* with her babe,  
 Who, seeking safety in the wilderness,  
 Were all surprised by *Herod*, while outstretched  
 In sleep beneath a palm-tree by a spring,  
 And killed—the very circumstance I paint, 130  
 Moving the pity and terror of my lords—  
 Exactly so have I, a month at least,  
 Your Fiscal, made me cognizant of facts,  
 Searched out, pried into, pressed the meaning forth  
 Of every piece of evidence in point, 135  
 How bloody *Herod* slew these innocents,—  
 Until the glad result is gained, the group

Demonstrably presented in detail,  
Their slumber and his onslaught,—like as life.  
Yea and, availing me of help allowed 140  
By law, discreet provision lest my lords  
Be too much troubled by effrontery,—  
The rack, law plies suspected crime withal—  
(Law that hath listened while the lyrist sang  
“ *Lene tormentum ingenio admoves,*” 145  
Gently thou joggest by a twinge the wit,  
“ *Plerumque duro,*” else were slow to blab !)  
Through this concession my full cup runs o’er :  
The guilty owns his guilt without reserve.  
Therefore by part and part I clutch my case 150  
Which, in entirety now,—momentous task,—  
My lords demand, so render them I must,  
Since, one poor pleading more and I have done.  
But shall I ply my papers, play my proofs,  
Parade my studies, fifty in a row, 155  
As though the Court were yet in pupilage  
And not the artist’s ultimate appeal?  
Much rather let me soar the height prescribed  
And, bowing low, proffer my picture’s self !

No more of proof, disproof,—such virtue was, 160  
 Such vice was never in Pompilia, now !  
 Far better say “ Behold Pompilia ! ”—(for  
 I leave the family as unmanageable,  
 And stick to just one portrait, but life-size.)  
 Hath calumny imputed to the fair 165  
 A blemish, mole on cheek or wart on chin,  
 Much more, blind hidden horrors best unnamed ?  
 Shall I descend to prove you, point by point,  
 Never was knock-knee known nor splay-foot found  
 In Phryne ? (I must let the portrait go, 170  
 Content me with the model, I believe)—  
 —I prove this ? An indignant sweep of hand,  
 Dash at and doing away with drapery,  
 And,—use your eyes, Athenians, smooth she smiles !  
 Or,—since my client can no longer smile, 175  
 And more appropriate instances abound,—  
 What is this Tale of Tarquin, how the slave  
 Was caught by him, preferred to Collatine ?  
 Thou, even from thy corpse-clothes virginal,  
 Look'st the lie dead, Lucretia ! 180

I, by the guidance of antiquity,  
(Our one infallible guide) now operate,  
Sure that the innocency shown is safe ;  
Sure, too, that, while I plead, the echoes cry  
(Lend my weak voice thy trump, sonorous Fame !)  
“ Monstrosity the Phrynean shape shall mar,  
“ Lucretia’s soul comport with Tarquin’s lie,  
“ When thistles grow on vines or thorns yield figs,  
“ Or oblique sentence leave this judgment-seat !”

A great theme : may my strength be adequate !  
For—paint Pompilia, dares my feebleness ?  
How did I unaware engage so much  
—Find myself undertaking to produce  
A faultless nature in a flawless form ?  
What ’s here ? Oh, turn aside nor dare the blaze  
Of such a crown, such constellation, say,  
As jewels here thy front, Humanity !  
First, infancy, pellucid as a pearl ;  
Then, childhood—stone which, dew-drop at the first  
(An old conjecture) sucks, by dint of gaze,  
Blue from the sky and turns to sapphire so :



Yet both these gems eclipsed by, last and best,  
 Womanliness and wifehood opaline,  
 Its milk-white pallor,—chastity,—suffused 205  
 With here and there a tint and hint of flame,—  
 Desire,—the lapidary loves to find.  
 Such jewels bind conspicuously thy brow,  
 Pompilia, infant, child, maid, woman, wife—  
 Crown the ideal in our earth at last ! 210  
 What should a faculty like mine do here?  
 Close eyes, or else, the rashlier hurry hand !

Which is to say,—lose no time but begin !  
*Sermocinando ne declamem*, Sirs,  
*Ultra clepsydrum*, as our preachers say, 215  
 Lest I exceed my hour-glass. Whereupon,  
 As Flaccus prompts, I dare the epic plunge—  
 Begin at once with marriage, up till when  
 Little or nothing would arrest your love,  
 In the easeful life o' the lady ; lamb and lamb, 220  
 How do they differ? Know one, you know all  
 Manners of maidenhood : mere maiden she.  
 And since all lambs are like in more than fleece,

Prepare to find that, lamb-like, she too frisks—  
O' the weaker sex, my lords, the weaker sex ! 225  
To whom, the Teian teaches us, for gift,  
Not strength,—man's dower,—but beauty, nature gave,  
“ Beauty in lieu of spears, in lieu of shields ! ”  
And what is beauty's sure concomitant,  
Nay, intimate essential character, 230  
But melting wiles, deliciousest deceits,  
The whole redoubted armoury of love ?  
Therefore of vernal pranks, dishevellings  
O' the hair of youth that dances April in,  
And easily-imagined Hebe-slips 235  
O'er sward which May makes over-smooth for foot—  
These shall we pry into?—or wiselier wink,  
Though numerous and dear they may have been ?

For lo, advancing Hymen and his pomp !  
*Discedunt nunc amores*, loves, farewell ! 240  
*Maneat amor*, let love, the sole, remain !  
Farewell to dewiness and prime of life !  
Remains the rough determined day : dance done,  
To work, with plough and harrow ! What comes next ?



'Tis Guido henceforth guides Pompilia's step, 245  
 Cries "No more friskings o'er the foodful glebe,  
 "Else, 'ware the whip!" Accordingly,—first crack  
 O' the thong,—we hear that his young wife was barred,  
*Cohibita fuit*, from the old free life,  
*Vitam liberio rem ducere.* 250  
 Demur we? Nowise: heifer brave the hind?  
 We seek not there should lapse the natural law,  
 The proper piety to lord and king  
 And husband: let the heifer bear the yoke!  
 Only, I crave he cast not patience off, 255  
 This hind; for deem you she endures the whip,  
 Nor winces at the goad, nay, restive, kicks?  
 What if the adversary's charge be just,  
 And all untowardly she pursue her way  
 With groan and grunt, though hind strike ne'er so hard?  
 If petulant remonstrance made appeal, 261  
 Unseasonable, o'erprotracted,—if  
 Importunate challenge taxed the public ear  
 When silence more decorously had served  
 For protestation,—if Pompilian plaint 265  
 Wrought but to aggravate Guidonian ire,—

Why, such mishaps, ungainly though they be,  
Ever companion change, are incident  
To altered modes and novelty of life :  
The philosophic mind expects no less, 270  
Smilingly knows and names the crisis, sits  
Waiting till old things go and new arrive.  
Therefore, I hold a husband but inept  
Who turns impatient at such transit-time,  
As if this running from the rod would last ! 275

Since, even while I speak, the end is reached  
Success awaits the soon-disheartened man,  
The parents turn their backs and leave the house,  
The wife may wail but none shall intervene,  
He hath attained his object, groom and bride 280  
Partake the nuptial bower no soul to see,  
Old things are passed and all again is new,  
Over and gone the obstacles to peace,  
*Novorum*—tenderly the Mantuan turns  
The expression, some such purpose in his eye— 285  
*Nascitur ordo !* Every storm is laid,  
And forth from plain each pleasant herb may peep,

Each bloom of wifehood in abeyance late :

(Confer a passage in the Canticles.)

But what if, as 't is wont with plant and wife,                   290  
Flowers,—after a suppression to good end,  
Still, when they do spring forth,—sprout here, spread  
there,

Anywhere likelier than beneath the foot  
O' the lawful good-man gardener of the ground ?  
He dug and dibbled, sowed and watered,—still                   295  
'T is a chance wayfarer shall pluck the increase.

Just so, respecting persons not too much,  
The lady, foes allege, put forth each charm  
And proper floweret of femininity  
To whosoever had a nose to smell,                   300

Or breast to deck : what if the charge be true ?  
The fault were grayer had she looked with choice,  
Fastidiously appointed who should grasp,  
Who, in the whole town, go without the prize !

To nobody she destined donative,                   305  
But, first come was first served, the accuser saith  
Put case her sort of . . in this kind . . escapes

Were many and oft and indiscriminate—  
Impute ye as the action were prepense,  
The gift particular, arguing malice so ? 310  
Which butterfly of the wide air shall brag  
“ I was preferred to Guido ”—when ’t is clear  
The cup, he quaffs at, lay with olent breast  
Open to gnat, midge, bee and moth as well ?  
One chalice entertained the company ; 315  
And if its peevish lord object the more,  
Mistake, misname such bounty in a wife,  
Haste we to advertise him—charm of cheek,  
Lustre of eye, allowance of the lip,  
All womanly components in a spouse, 320  
These are no household-bread each stranger’s bite  
Leaves by so much diminished for the mouth  
O’ the master of the house at supper-time :  
But rather like a lump of spice they lie,  
Morsel of myrrh, which scents the neighbourhood 325  
Yet greets its lord no lighter by a grain.

Nay, even so, he shall be satisfied !  
Concede we there was reason in his wrong,

Grant we his grievance and content the man !  
 For lo, Pompilia, she submits herself ; 330  
 Ere three revolving years have crowned their course,  
 Off and away she puts this same reproach  
 Of lavish bounty, inconsiderate gift  
 O' the sweets of wifehood stored to other ends :  
 No longer shall he blame " She none excludes," 335  
 But substitute " She laudably sees all,  
 " Searches the best out and selects the same."  
 For who is here, long sought and latest found,  
 Waiting his turn unmoved amid the whirl,  
 " *Constans in levitate*,"—Ha, my lords ? 340  
 Calm in his levity,—indulge the quip !—  
 Since 'tis a levite bears the bell away,  
 Parades him henceforth as Pompilia's choice.  
 "Tis no ignoble object, husband ! Doubt'st ?  
 When here comes tripping Flaccus with his phrase 345  
 " Trust me, no miscreant singled from the mob,  
 " *Crede non illum tibi de scelestis*  
 " *Plebe delectum*," but a man of mark,  
 A priest, dost hear ? Why then, submit thyself !  
 Priest, ay and very phoenix of such fowl, 350

Well-born, of culture, young and vigorous,  
Comely too, since precise the precept points—  
On the selected levite be there found  
Nor mole nor scar nor blemish, lest the mind  
Come all uncandid through the thwarting flesh ! 355  
Was not the son of Jesse ruddy, sleek,  
Pleasant to look on, pleasant every way ?  
Since well he smote the harp and sweetly sang,  
And danced till Abigail came out to see,  
And seeing smiled and smiling ministered 360  
The raisin-cluster and the cake of figs,  
With ready meal refreshed the gifted youth,  
Till Nabal, who was absent shearing sheep,  
Felt heart sink, took to bed (discreetly done—  
They might have been beforehand with him else) 365  
And died—would Guido had behaved as well !  
But ah, the faith of early days is gone,  
*Heu prisca fides !* Nothing died in him  
Save courtesy, good sense and proper trust,  
Which, when they ebb from souls they should o'erflow,  
Discover stub, weed, sludge and ugliness. 371  
(The Pope, you know, is Neapolitan

And relishes a sea-side simile.)  
Deserted by each charitable wave,  
Ruined, left high and dry, shows jealous now ! 375  
Jealous avouched, paraded : tax the fool  
With any peccadillo, he responds  
Truly I beat my wife through jealousy,  
Imprisoned her and punished otherwise,  
Being jealous : now would threaten, sword in hand, 380  
Now manage to mix poison in her sight,  
And so forth : jealously I dealt, in fine."  
Concede the fact and what remains to prove ?  
Have I to teach my masters what effect  
That jealousy and how, befooling men, 385  
It makes false true; abuses eye and ear,  
Turns the mist adamant, loads with sound  
Silence, and into void and vacancy  
Crowds a whole phalanx of conspiring foes ?  
Wherefore who owns " I watched with jealousy 390  
My wife " adds " for no reason in the world ! "  
What need that who says " madman " should remark  
The thing he thought a serpent proved an eel ?"—  
Perchance the right Comacchian, six foot length,

And not an inch too long for that same pie 395  
(Master Arcangeli has heard of such)  
Whose succulence makes fasting bearable ;  
Meant to regale some moody splenetic  
Who pleases to mistake the donor's gift,  
And spies—I know not what Lernæan snake 400  
I' the luscious Lenten creature, stamps forsooth  
The dainty in the dust.

Enough ! Prepare,  
His lunes announced, for downright lunacy !  
*Insanit homo*, threat succeeds to threat, 405  
And blow redoubles blow,—his wife, the block.  
But, if a block, shall not she jar the hand  
That buffets her ? The injurious idle stone  
Rebounds and fits the head of him who flung.  
Causeless rage breeds, i' the wife now, rageful cause, 410  
Tyranny wakes rebellion from its sleep.  
Rebellion, say I ?—rather, self-defence,  
Laudable wish to live and see good days,  
Pricks our Pompilia on to fly the foe  
By any means, at any price,—nay, more, 415



Nay, most of all, i' the very interest  
 Of the foe that, baffled of his blind desire  
 At any price, is trueliest victor so.  
 Shall he effect his crime and lose his soul?  
 No, dictates duty to a loving wife. 420  
 Far better that the unconsummate blow,  
 Adroitly baulked by her, should back again,  
 Correctively admonish his own pate !

Crime then,—the Court is with me?—she must crush ;  
 How crush it? By all efficacious means ; 425  
 And these,—why, what in woman should they be?  
 ' With horns the bull, with teeth the lion fights,  
 ' To woman," quoth the lyrist quoted late,  
 ' Nor teeth, nor horns, but beauty, Nature gave !"  
 Pretty i' the Pagan ! Who dares blame the use 430  
 Of the armoury thus allowed for natural,—  
 Exclaim against a seeming-dubious play  
 O' the sole permitted weapon, spear and shield  
 Alike, resorted to i' the circumstance  
 By poor Pompilia ? Grant she somewhat plied 435  
 Arts that allure, the magic nod and wink,

The witchery of gesture, spell of word,  
Whereby the likelier to enlist this friend,  
Yet stranger, as a champion on her side ?  
Such, being but mere man, ('t was all she knew), 440  
Must be made sure by beauty's silken bond,  
The weakness that subdues the strong, and bows  
Wisdom alike and folly. Grant the tale  
O' the husband, which is false, for proved and true  
To the letter,—or the letters, I should say, 445  
The abominations he professed to find  
And fix upon Pompilia and the priest,—  
Allòw them hers—for though she could not write,  
In early days of Eve-like innocence  
That plucked no apple from the knowledge-tree, 450  
Yet, at the Serpent's word, Eve plucks and eats  
And knows—especially how to read and write :  
And so Pompilia,—as the move o' the maw,  
Quoth Persius, makes a parrot bid “ Good-day ! ”  
A crow salute the concave, and a pie 455  
Endeavour at proficiency in speech,—  
So she, through hunger after fellowship,  
May well have learned, though late, to play the scribe :

As indeed, there 's one letter on the list  
 Explicitly declares did happen here. 460  
 " You thought my letters could be none of mine,"  
 She tells her parents—" mine, who wanted skill ;  
 " But now I have the skill, and write, you see ! "  
 She needed write love-letters, so she learned,  
 " *Negatas artifex sequi voces* "—though 465  
 This letter nowise 'scapes the common lot,  
 But lies i' the condemnation of the rest,  
 Found by the husband's self who forged them all.  
 Yet, for the sacredness of argument,  
 For this once an exemption shall it plead— 470  
 Anything, anything to let the wheels  
 Of argument run glibly to their goal !  
 Concede she wrote (which were preposterous)  
 This and the other epistle,—what of it ?  
 Where does the figment touch her candid fame ? 475  
 Being in peril of her life— " my life,  
 " Not an hour's purchase," as the letter runs,—  
 And having but one stay in this extreme,  
 And out of the wide world a single friend—  
 What could she other than resort to him, 480

And how with any hope resort but thus?  
Shall modesty dare bid a stranger brave  
Danger, disgrace, nay death in her behalf—  
Think to entice the sternness of the steel  
Save by the magnet moves the manly mind? 485  
—Most of all when such mind is hampered so  
By growth of circumstance athwart the life  
O' the natural man, that decency forbids  
He stoop and take the common privilege,  
Say frank "I love," as all the vulgar do. 490  
A man is wedded to philosophy,  
Married to statesmanship; a man is old;  
A man is fettered by the foolishness  
He took for wisdom and talked ten years since;  
A man is, like our friend the Canon here, 495  
A priest, and wicked if he break his vow:  
He dare to love, who may be Pope one day?  
Suppose this man could love, though, all the same—  
From what embarrassment she sets him free  
Should one, a woman he could love, speak first— 500  
" 'T is I who break reserve, begin appeal,  
" Confess that, whether you love me or no,

“ I love you ! ” What an ease to dignity,  
 What help of pride from the hard high-backed chair  
 Down to the carpet where the kittens bask, 505  
 All under the pretence of gratitude !

From all which, I deduce—the lady here  
 Was bound to proffer nothing short of love  
 To the priest whose service was to save her. What ?  
 Shall she propose him lucre, dust o’ the mine, 510  
 Rubbish o’ the rock, some diamond, muckworms prize,  
 Or pearl secreted by a sickly fish ?  
 Scarcely ! She caters for a generous taste.  
 ’T is love shall beckon, beauty bid to breast,  
 Till all the Samson sink into the snare ! 515  
 Because, permit the end—permit therewith  
 Means to the end !

How say you, good my lords ?

I hope you heard my adversary ring  
 The changes on this precept : now, let me 520  
 Reverse the peal ! *Quia dato licito fine,*  
*Ad illum assequendum ordinata*  
*Non sunt damnanda media,—licit end*

Enough was the escape from death, I hope,  
To legalize the means illicit else 525  
Of feigned love, false allurement, fancied fact.  
Thus Venus losing Cupid on a day,  
(See that *Idyllium Moschi*) seeking help,  
In the anxiety of motherhood,  
Allowably promised "Who shall bring report 530  
"Where he is wandered to, my winged babe,  
"I give him for reward a nectared kiss ;  
"But who brings safely back the truant's self,  
"His be a super-sweet makes kiss seem cold !"  
Are not these things writ for example-sake ? 535

To such permitted motive, then, refer  
All those professions, else were hard explain,  
Of hope, fear, jealousy, and the rest of love !  
He is Myrtillus, Amaryllis she,  
She burns, he freezes,—all a mere device 540  
To catch and keep the man may save her life,  
Whom otherwise nor catches she nor keeps !  
Worst, once, is best now : in all faith, she feigns :  
Feigning,—the liker innocence to guilt,

The truer to the life is what she feigns ! 545  
 How if Ulysses,—when, for public good  
 He sunk particular qualms and played the spy,  
 Entered Troy's hostile gate in beggar's garb—  
 How if he first had boggled at this clout,  
 Grown dainty o'er that clack-dish? Grime is grace 550  
 To whoso gropes amid the dung for gold.

Hence, beyond promises, we praise each proof  
 That promise was not simply made to break,—  
 No moonshine-structure meant to fade at dawn :  
 So call—(proofs consequent and requisite)— 555  
 What enemies allege of—more than words,  
 Deeds—meeting at the window, twilight-tryst,  
 Nocturnal entertainment in the dim  
 Old labyrinthine palace ; lies, we know—  
 Inventions we, long since, turned inside out. 560  
 Would such external semblance of intrigue  
 Demonstrate that intrigue must lurk perdue ?  
 Does every hazel-sheath disclose a nut ?  
 He were a Molinist who dared maintain  
 That midnight meetings in a screened alcove 565

Must argue folly in a matron—since  
So would he bring a slur on Judith's self,  
Commended beyond women that she lured  
The lustful to destruction through his lust.  
Pompilia took not Judith's liberty, 570  
No faulchion find you in her hand to smite,—  
No damsel to convey the head in dish,  
Of Holophernes,—style the Canon so—  
Or is it the Count? If I entangle me  
With my similitudes,—if wax wings melt, 575  
And earthward down I drop, not mine the fault :  
Blame your beneficence, O Court, O sun,  
Whereof the beamy smile affects my flight !  
What matter, so Pompilia's fame revive  
I' the warmth that proves the bane of Icarus? 580

Yea, we have shown it lawful, necessary  
Pompilia leave her husband, seek the house  
O' the parents : and because 'twixt home and home  
Lies a long road with many a danger rife,  
Lions by the way and serpents in the path, 585  
To rob and ravish,—much behoves she keep



Each shadow of suspicion from fair fame,  
 For her own sake much, but for his sake more,  
 The ingrate husband ! Evidence shall be,  
 Some witness to the world how white she walks 590  
 I' the mire she wanders through ere Rome she reach.  
 And who so proper witness as a priest?  
 Gainsay ye ? Let me hear who dares gainsay !  
 I hope we still can punish heretics !  
 " Give me the man " I say with him of Gath, 595  
 " That we may fight together ! " None, I think :  
 The priest is granted me.

Then, if a priest,  
 One juvenile and potent : else, mayhap,  
 That dragon, our Saint George would slay, slays him.  
 And should fair face accompany strong hand, 601  
 The more complete equipment : nothing mars  
 Work, else praiseworthy, like a bodily flaw  
 I' the worker : as 't is said Saint Paul himself  
 Deplored the check o' the puny presence, still 605  
 Cheating his fulmination of its flash,  
 Albeit the bolt therein went true to oak.

Therefore the agent, as prescribed, she takes,—  
A priest, juvenile, potent, handsome too,—  
In all obedience : “ good,” you grant again. 610  
Do you ? I would ye were the husband, lords !  
How prompt and facile might departure be !  
How boldly would Pompilia and the priest  
March out of door, spread flag at beat of drum,  
But that inapprehensive Guido grants 615  
Neither premiss nor yet conclusion here,  
And, purblind, dreads a bear in every bush !  
For his own quietude and comfort, then,  
Means must be found for flight in masquerade  
At hour when all things sleep.—“ Save jealousy !” 620  
Right, judges ! Therefore shall the lady’s wit  
Supply the boon thwart nature baulks him of,  
And do him service with the potent drug  
(Helen’s nepenthe, as my lords opine)  
Shall respite blessedly each frittered nerve 625  
O’ the much-enduring man : accordingly,  
There lies he, duly dosed and sound asleep,  
Relieved of woes, or real or raved about.  
While soft she leaves his side, he shall not wake ;

Nor stop who steals away to join her friend, 630  
 Nor do him mischief should he catch that friend  
 Intent on more than friendly office,—nay,  
 Nor get himself raw head and bones laid bare  
 In payment of his apparition !

Thus 635  
 Would I defend the step,—were the thing true  
 Which is a fable,—see my former speech,—  
 That Guido slept (who never slept a wink)  
 Through treachery, an opiate from his wife,  
 Who not so much as knew what opiates mean. 640

Now she may start : but hist,—a stoppage still !  
 A journey is an enterprise which costs !  
 As in campaigns, we fight and others pay,  
*Suis expensis, nemo militat.*  
 'T is Guido's self we guard from accident, 645  
 Ensuring safety to Pompilia, versed  
 Nowise in misadventures by the way,  
 Hard riding and rough quarters, the rude fare,  
 The unready host. What magic mitigates

Each plague of travel to the unpractised wife ? 650  
Money, sweet Sirs ! And were the fiction fact,  
She helped herself thereto with liberal hand  
From out the husband's store,—what fitter use  
Was ever husband's money destined to ?  
With bag and baggage thus did Dido once 655  
Decamp,—for more authority, a queen !

So is she fairly on her route at last,  
Prepared for either fortune : nay and if  
The priest, now all a-glow with enterprise,  
Cool somewhat presently when fades the flush 660  
O' the first adventure, clouded o'er belike  
By doubts, misgivings how the day may die,  
Though born with such auroral brilliance,—if  
The brow seem over-pensive and the lip  
'Gin lag and lose the prattle lightsome late,— 665  
Vanquished by tedium of a prolonged jaunt  
In a close carriage o'er a jolting road,  
With only one young female substitute  
For seventeen other Canons of ripe age  
Were wont to keep him company in church,— 670

Shall not Pompilia haste to dissipate  
The silent cloud that, gathering, bodes her bale?—  
Prop the irresoluteness may portend  
Suspension of the project, check the flight,  
Bring ruin on them both?—use every means, 675  
Since means to the end are lawful? What i' the way  
Of wile should have allowance like a kiss  
Sagely and sisterly administered,  
*Sororia saltem oscula?* We find  
Such was the remedy her wit applied 680  
To each incipient scruple of the priest,  
If we believe,—as, while my wit is mine  
I cannot,—what the driver testifies,  
Borsi, called Venerino, the mere tool  
Of Guido and his friend the Governor,— 685  
The avowal I proved wrung from out the wretch,  
After long rotting in imprisonment,  
As price of liberty and favour: long  
They tempted, he at last succumbed, and lo  
Counted them out full tale each kiss required,— 690  
“The journey was one long embrace,” quoth he.  
Still, though we should believe the driver's lie,

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Nor even admit as probable excuse,  
Right reading of the riddle,—as I urged  
In my first argument, with fruit perhaps— 695  
That what the owl-like eyes (at back of head !)  
O' the driver, drowsed by driving night and day,  
Supposed a vulgar interchange of love,  
This was but innocent jog of head 'gainst head,  
Cheek meeting jowl as apple may touch pear 700  
From branch and branch contiguous in the wind,  
When Autumn blusters and the orchard rocks.  
The rapid run and the rough road were cause  
O' the casual ambiguity, no harm  
I' the world to eyes awake and penetrative. 705  
Yet,—not to grasp a truth I can forego  
And safely fight without and conquer still,—  
Say, she kissed him, and he kissed her again !  
Such osculation was a potent means,  
A very efficacious help, no doubt : 710  
This with a third part of her nectar did  
Venus imbue : why should Pompilia fling  
The poet's declaration in his teeth ?—  
Pause to employ what,—since it had success,

And kept the priest her servant to the end,— 715  
 We must presume of energy enough,  
 No whit superfluous, so permissible?

The goal is gained : day, night and yet a day  
 Have run their round : a long and devious road  
 Is traversed,—many manners, various men 720  
 Passed in review, what cities did they see,  
 What hamlets mark, what profitable food  
 For after-meditation cull and store !  
 Till Rome, that Rome whereof—this voice,  
 Would it might make our Molinists observe, 725  
 That she is built upon a rock nor shall  
 Their powers prevail against her !—Rome, I say,  
 Is all but reached ; one stage more and they stop  
 Saved : pluck up heart, ye pair, and forward, then !

Ah, Nature—baffled she recurs, alas ! 730  
 Nature imperiously exacts her due,  
 Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak,  
 Pompilia needs must acquiesce and swoon,  
 Give hopes alike and fears a breathing-while.

The innocent sleep soundly : sound she sleeps. 735  
So let her slumber, then, unguarded save  
By her own chastity, a triple mail,  
And his good hand whose stalwart arms have borne  
The sweet and senseless burthen like a babe  
From coach to couch,—the serviceable man ! 740  
Nay, what and if he gazed rewardedly  
On the pale beauty prisoned in embrace,  
Stooped over, stole a balmy breath perhaps  
For more assurance sleep was not decease—  
“ *Ut vidi*,” “ how I saw ! ” succeeded by 745  
“ *Ut perii*,” “ how I sudden lost my brains ! ”  
—What harm ensued to her unconscious quite ?  
For, curiosity—how natural !  
Importunateness—what a privilege  
In the ardent sex ! And why curb ardour here ? 750  
How can the priest but pity whom he saved ?  
And pity is how near to love, and love  
How neighbourly to unreasonableness !  
And for love’s object, whether love were sage  
Or foolish, could Pompilia know or care, 755  
Being still sound asleep, as I premised ?



Thus the philosopher absorbed by thought,  
Even Archimedes, busy o'er a book  
The while besiegers sacked his Syracuse,  
Was ignorant of the imminence o' the point 760  
O' the sword till it surprised him : let it stab,  
And never knew himself was dead at all.  
So sleep thou on, secure whate'er betide !  
For thou, too, hast thy problem hard to solve—  
How so much beauty is compatible 765  
With so much innocence !

Fit place, methinks,  
While in this task she rosily is lost,  
To treat of and repel objection here  
Which,—frivolous, I grant,—but, still misgives 770  
My mind, it may have flitted, gadfly-like,  
And teased the Court at times—as if, all said  
And done, there still seemed, one might nearly  
say,  
In a certain acceptance, somewhat more  
Of what may pass for insincerity, 775  
Falsehood, throughout the course Pompilia took,

Than befits Christian. Pagans held, we know,  
We always ought to aim at good and truth,  
Not always put one thing in the same words :  
*Non idem semper dicere sed spectare*  
*Debemus.* But the Pagan yoke was light ;  
“ Lie not at all,” the exacter precept bids :  
Each least lie breaks the law,—is sin, ye hold.  
I humble me, but venture to submit—  
What prevents sin, itself is sinless, sure :  
And sin, which hinders sin of deeper dye,  
Softens itself away by contrast so.  
Conceive me ! Little sin, by none at all,  
Were properly condemned for great : but great,  
By greater, dwindles into small again.  
Now, what is greatest sin of womanhood ?  
That which unwomans it, abolishes  
The nature of the woman,—impudence.  
Who contradicts me here ? Concede me, then,  
Whatever friendly fault may interpose  
To save the sex from self-abolishment  
Is three-parts on the way to virtue’s rank !  
Now, what is taxed here as duplicity,

Feint, wile and trick,—admitted for the nonce,—  
 What worse do one and all than interpose, 800  
 Hold, as it were, a deprecating hand,  
 Statuesquely, in the Medicean mode,  
 Before some shame which modesty would veil?  
 Who blames the gesture prettily perverse?  
 Thus,—lest ye miss a point illustrative,— 805  
 Admit the husband's calumny—allow  
 That the wife, having penned the epistle fraught  
 With horrors, charge on charge of crime, she heaped  
 O' the head of Pietro and Violante—(still  
 Presumed her parents)—and despatched the thing 810  
 To their arch-enemy Paolo, through free choice  
 And no sort of compulsion in the world—  
 Put case that she discards simplicity  
 For craft, denies the voluntary act,  
 Declares herself a passive instrument 815  
 I' the hands of Guido ; duped by knavery,  
 She traced the characters, she could not write,  
 And took on trust the unread sense which, read,  
 Were recognized but to be spurned at once.  
 Allow this calumny, I reiterate ! 820

Who is so dull as wonder at the pose  
Of our Pompilia in the circumstance ?  
Who sees not that the too-ingenuous soul,  
Repugnant even at a duty done  
Which brought beneath too scrutinizing glare 825  
The misdemeanours,—buried in the dark,—  
Of the authors of her being, she believed,—  
Stung to the quick at her impulsive deed,  
And willing to repair what harm it worked,  
She—wise in this beyond what Nero proved, 830  
Who, when needs were the candid juvenile  
Should sign the warrant, doom the guilty dead,  
“ Would I had never learned to write,” quoth he !  
—Pompilia rose above the Roman, cried  
“ To read or write I never learned at all !” 835  
O splendidly mendacious !

But time fleets :

Let us not linger : hurry to the end,  
Since end does flight and all disastrously.  
Beware ye blame desert for unsuccess, 840  
Disparage each expedient else to praise,

Call failure folly ! Man's best effort fails.  
After ten years' resistance Troy fell flat :  
Could valour save a town, Troy still had stood.  
Pompilia came off halting in no point 845  
Of courage, conduct, the long journey through :  
But nature sank exhausted at the close,  
And, as I said, she swooned and slept all night,  
Morn breaks and brings the husband : we assist  
At the spectacle. Discovery succeeds. 850  
Ha, how is this ? What moonstruck rage is here ?  
Though we confess to partial frailty now,  
To error in a woman and a wife,  
Is 't by the rough way she shall be reclaimed ?  
Who bursts upon her chambered privacy ? 855  
What crowd profanes the chaste *cubiculum* ?  
What outcries and lewd laughter, scurril gibe  
And ribald jest to scare the ministrant  
Good angels that commerce with souls in sleep ?  
Why, had the worst crowned Guido to his wish, 860  
Confirmed his most irrational surmise,  
Yet there be bounds to man's emotion, checks  
To an immoderate astonishment.

'T is decent horror, regulated wrath,  
Befit our dispensation : have we back 865  
The old Pagan licence ? Shall a Vulcan clap  
His net o' the sudden and expose the pair  
To the unquenchable universal mirth ?  
A feat, antiquity saw scandal in  
So clearly, that the nauseous tale thereof— 870  
Demodocus his nugatory song—  
Hath ever been concluded modern stuff  
Impossible to the mouth of the grave Muse,  
So, foisted into that Eighth Odyssey  
By some impertinent pickthank. O thou fool, 875  
Count Guido Franceschini, what were gained  
By publishing thy shame thus to the world ?  
Were all the precepts of the wise a waste—  
Bred in thee not one touch of reverence ?  
Why, say thy wife—admonish we the fool,— 880  
Were false, and thou bid chronicle thy shame,  
Much rather should thy teeth bite out thy tongue,  
Dumb lip consort with desecrated brow,  
Silence become historiographer,  
And thou—thine own Cornelius Tacitus ! 885

But virtue, barred, still leaps the barrier, lords !  
 —Still, moon-like, penetrates the encroaching mist  
 And bursts, all broad and bare, on night, ye know !  
 Surprised, then, in the garb of truth, perhaps,  
 Pompilia, thus opposed, breaks obstacle, 890  
 Springs to her feet, and stands Thalassian-pure,  
 Confronts the foe,—nay, catches at his sword  
 And tries to kill the intruder, he complains.  
 Why, so she gave her lord his lesson back,  
 Crowned him, this time, the virtuous woman's way, 895  
 With an exact obedience ; he brought sword,  
 She drew the same, since swords are meant to draw.  
 Tell not me 'tis sharp play with tools on edge !  
 It was the husband chose the weapon here.  
 Why did not he inaugurate the game 900  
 With some gentility of apophthegm  
 Still pregnant on the philosophic page,  
 Some captivating cadence still a-lisp  
 O' the poet's lyre ? Such spells subdue the surge,  
 Make tame the tempest, much more mitigate 905  
 The passions of the mind, and probably  
 Had moved Pompilia to a smiling blush.

No, he must needs prefer the argument  
O' the blow : and she obeyed, in duty bound,  
Returned him buffet ratiocinative— 910  
Ay, in the reasoner's own interest,  
For wife must follow whither husband leads,  
Vindicate honour as himself prescribes,  
Save him the very way himself bids save !  
No question but who jumps into a quag 915  
Should stretch forth hand and pray one " Pull me out  
" By the hand ! " such were the customary cry :  
But Guido pleased to bid " Leave hand alone !  
" Join both feet, rather, jump upon my head,  
" I extricate myself by the rebound ! " 920  
And dutifully as enjoined she jumped—  
Drew his own sword and menaced his own life,  
Anything to content a wilful spouse.

And so he was contented—one must do  
Justice to the expedient which succeeds, 925  
Strange as it seem : at flourish of the blade,  
The crowd drew back, stood breathless and abashed,  
Then murmured " This should be no wanton wife,



" No conscience-stricken creature, caught i' the act,  
 " And patiently awaiting our first stone : 930  
 " But a poor hard-pressed all-bewildered thing,  
 " Has rushed so far, misguidedly perhaps,  
 " Meaning no more harm than a frightened sheep.  
 " She sought for aid ; and if she made mistake  
 " I' the man could aid most, why—so mortals do : 935  
 " Even the blessed Magdalen mistook  
 " Far less forgiveably : consult the place—  
 " Supposing him to be the gardener,  
 " " Sir," said she, and so following." Why more words?  
 Forthwith the wife is pronounced innocent : 940  
 What would the husband more than gain his cause,  
 And find that honour flash in the world's eye,  
 His apprehension was lest soil had smirched ?

So, happily the adventure comes to close  
 Whereon my fat opponent grounds his charge 945  
 Preposterous : at mid-day he groans " How dark !"  
 Listen to me, thou Archangelic swine !  
 Where is the ambiguity to blame,  
 The flaw to find in our Pompilia ? Safe

She stands, see ! Does thy comment follow quick 950  
“ Safe, inasmuch as at the end proposed ;  
“ But thither she picked way by devious path—  
“ Stands dirtied, no dubiety at all !  
“ I recognize success, yet, all the same,  
“ Importunately will suggestion prick— 955  
“ What, had Pompilia gained the right to boast  
“ ‘ No devious path, no doubtful patch was mine,  
“ ‘ I saved my head nor sacrificed my foot ? ’  
“ Why, being in a peril, show mistrust  
“ Of the angels set to guard the innocent ? 960  
“ Why rather hold by obvious vulgar help  
“ Of stratagem and subterfuge, excused  
“ Somewhat, but still no less a foil, a fault,  
“ Since low with high, and good with bad is linked ?  
“ Methinks I view some ancient bas-relief. 965  
“ There stands Hesione thrust out by Troy,  
“ Her father’s hand has chained her to a crag,  
“ Her mother’s from the virgin plucked the vest,  
“ At a safe distance both distressful watch,  
“ While near and nearer comes the snorting orc. 970  
“ I look that, white and perfect to the end,

" She wait till Jove despatch some demigod ;  
 " Not that,—impatient of celestial club  
 " Alcmena's son should brandish at the beast,—  
 " She daub, disguise her dainty limbs with pitch, 975  
 " And so elude the purblind monster ! Ay,  
 " The trick succeeds, but 't is an ugly trick,  
 " Where needs have been no trick !"

My answer ? Faugh !

*Nimis incongrue !* Too absurdly put ! 980

*Sententiam ego teneo contrariam,*

Trick, I maintain, had no alternative.

The heavens were bound with brass,—Jove far at  
 feast

(No feast like that thou didst not ask me to,  
 Arcangeli,—I heard of thy regale !) 985

With the unblamed Æthiop,—Hercules spun wool .

I' the lap of Omphale, while Virtue shrieked—

The brute came paddling all the faster. You

Of Troy, who stood at distance, where 's the aid

You offered in the extremity ? Most and least, 990

Gentle and simple, here the Governor,

There the Archbishop, everywhere the friends,  
Shook heads and waited for a miracle,  
Or went their way, left Virtue to her fate.  
Just this one rough and ready man leapt forth !      995  
—Was found, sole anti-Fabius (dare I say)  
To restore things, with no delay at all,  
*Qui, haud cunctando, rem restituit !* He,  
He only, Caponsacchi 'mid a crowd,  
Caught Virtue up, carried Pompilia off      1000  
Thro' the gaping impotence of sympathy  
In ranged Arezzo : what you take for pitch,  
Is nothing worse, belike, than black and blue,  
Mere evanescent proof that hardy hands  
Did yeoman's service, cared not where the gripe      1005  
Was more than duly energetic : bruised,  
She smarts a little, but her bones are saved  
A fracture, and her skin will soon show sleek.  
How it disgusts when weakness, false-refined,  
Censures the honest rude effective strength,—      1010  
When sickly dreamers of the impossible  
Decry plain sturdiness which does the feat  
With eyes wide open !

Did occasion serve,  
 I could illustrate, if my lords allow ; 1015  
*Quid vetat*, what forbids, I aptly ask  
 With Horace, that I give my anger vent,  
 While I let breathe, no less, and recreate  
 The gravity of my Judges, by a tale—  
 A case in point—what though an apologue 1020  
 Graced by tradition,—possibly a fact ?  
 Tradition must precede all scripture, words  
 Serve as our warrant ere our books can be :  
 So, to tradition back we needs must go  
 For any fact's authority : and this 1025  
 Hath lived so far (like jewel hid in muck)  
 O' the page of that old lying vanity  
 Called "Sepher Toldoth Yeschu : " God be praised,  
 I read no Hebrew,—take the thing on trust :  
 But I believe the writer meant no good 1030  
 (Blind as he was to truth in some respects)  
 To our pestiferous and schismatic . . well,  
 My lords' conjecture be the touchstone, show  
 The thing for what it is ! The author lacks  
 Discretion, and his zeal exceeds : but zeal,— 1035

How rare in our degenerate day ! Enough !  
Here is the story,—fear not, I shall chop\*  
And change a little, else my Jew would press  
All too unmannerly before the Court.

It happened once,—begins this foolish Jew,                    1040  
Pretending to write Christian history,—  
That three, held greatest, best and worst of men,  
Peter and John and Judas, spent a day  
In toil and travel through the country-side  
On some sufficient business—I suspect,                    1045  
Suppression of some Molinism i' the bud.  
Foot-sore and hungry, dropping with fatigue,  
They reached by nightfall a poor lonely grange,  
Hostel or inn : so, knocked and entered there.  
“ Your pleasure, great ones ? ”—“ Shelter, rest and food ! ”  
For shelter, there was one bare room above ;                    1051  
For rest therein, three beds of bundled straw :  
For food, one wretched starveling fowl, no more—  
Meat for one mouth, but mockery for three.  
“ You have my utmost.” How should supper serve ?  
Peter broke silence. “ To the spit with fowl !                    1056

" And while 't is cooking, sleep !—since beds there be,  
 " And, so far, <sup>s</sup>atisfaction of a want.  
 " Sleep we an hour, awake at supper-time,  
 " Then each of us narrate the dream he had, 1060  
 " And he whose dream shall prove the happiest, point  
 " The clearliest out the dreamer as ordained  
 " Beyond his fellows to receive the fowl,  
 " Him let our shares be cheerful tribute to,  
 " His the entire meal, may it do him good !" 1065  
 Who could dispute so plain a consequence ?  
 So said, so done : each hurried to his straw,  
 Slept his hour's-sleep and dreamed his dream, and woke.  
 " I," commenced John, " dreamed that I gained the  
     prize  
 " We all aspire to : the proud place was mine, 1070  
 " Throughout the earth and to the end of time  
 " I was the Loved Disciple : mine the meal !"  
 " But I," proceeded Peter, " dreamed, a word  
 " Gave me the headship of our company,  
 " Made me the Vicar and Vice-regent, gave 1075  
 " The keys of Heaven and Hell into my hand,  
 " And o'er the earth, dominion : mine the meal !"

“ While I,” submitted in soft under-tone  
The Iscariot—sense of his unworthiness  
Turning each eye up to the inmost white— 1080  
With long-drawn sigh, yet letting both lips smack,  
“ I have had just the pitifullest dream  
“ That ever proved man meanest of his mates,  
“ And born foot-washer and foot-wiper, nay  
“ Foot-kisser to each comrade of you all ! 1085  
“ I dreamed I dreamed ; and in that mimic dream  
“ (Impalpable to dream as dream to fact)  
“ Methought I meanly chose to sleep no wink  
“ But wait until I heard my brethren breathe ;  
“ Then stole from couch, slipped noiseless to the door,  
“ Slid downstairs, furtively approached the hearth, 1091  
“ Found the fowl duly brown, both back and breast,  
“ Hissing in harmony with the cricket’s chirp,  
“ Grilled to a point ; said no grace but fell to,  
“ Nor finished till the skeleton lay bare. 1095  
“ In penitence for which ignoble dream,  
“ Lo, I renounce my portion cheerfully !  
“ Fie on the flesh—be mine the etherial gust,  
“ And yours the sublunary sustenance !



“ See, that whate’er be left, ye give the poor ! ” 1100  
 Down the two scuttled, one on other’s heel,  
 Stung by a fell surmise ; and found, alack,  
 A goodly savour, both the drumstick-bones,  
 And that which henceforth took the appropriate name  
 O’ the merry-thought, in memory of the fact 1105  
 That to keep wide awake is our best dream.

So,—as was said once of Thucydides  
 And his sole joke, “ The lion, lo, hath laughed ! ”—  
 Just so, the Governor and all that ’s great  
 I’ the city, never meant that Innocence 1110  
 Should starve thus while Authority sat at meat.  
 They meant to fling a bone at banquet’s end,  
 Wished well to our Pompilia—in their dreams,  
 Nor bore the secular sword in vain—asleep :  
 Just so the Archbishop and all good like him 1115  
 Went to bed meaning to pour oil and wine  
 I’ the wounds of her, next day,—but long ere day,  
 They had burned the one and drunk the other : while  
 Just so, again, contrariwise, the priest  
 Sustained poor Nature in extremity 1120

By stuffing barley-bread into her mouth,  
Saving Pompilia (grant the parallel)  
By the plain homely and straightforward way  
Taught him by common-sense. Let others shriek  
“ Oh what refined expedients did we dream  
“ Proved us the only fit to help the fair !”  
He cried “ A carriage waits, jump in with me !”

And now, this application pardoned, lords,—  
This recreative pause and breathing-while,—  
Back to beseeemingness and gravity !  
For Law steps in : Guido appeals to Law,  
Demands she arbitrate,—does well for once.  
O Law, of thee how neatly was it said  
By that old Sophocles, thou hast thy seat  
I' the very breast of Jove, no meanlier throned !  
Here is a piece of work now, hitherto  
Begun and carried on, concluded near,  
Without an eye-glance cast thy sceptre's way ;  
And, lo the stumbling and discomfiture !  
Well may you call them “ lawless,” means men take  
To extricate themselves through mother-wit

When tangled haply in the toils of life !  
 Guido would try conclusions with his foe,  
 Whoe'er the foe was and whate'er the offence ;  
 He would recover certain dowry-dues : 1145  
 Instead of asking Law to lend a hand,  
 What pother of sword drawn and pistol cocked,  
 What peddling with forged letters and paid spies,  
 Politic circumvention !—all to end  
 As it began—by loss of the fool's head, 1150  
 First in a figure, presently in a fact.  
 It is a lesson to mankind at large.  
 How other were the end, would men be sage  
 And bear confidingly each quarrel straight,  
 O Law, to thy recipient mother-knees ! 1155  
 How would the children light come and prompt go,  
 This, with a red-cheeked apple for reward,  
 The other, peradventure red-cheeked too  
 I' the rear, by taste of birch for punishment.  
 No foolish brawling murders any more ! 1160  
 Peace for the household, practice for the Fisc,  
 And plenty for the exchequer of my lords !  
 Too much to hope, in this world : in the next,

Who knows? Since, why should sit the Twelve enthroned  
To judge the tribes, unless the tribes be judged? 1165  
And 't is impossible but offences come :  
So, all 's one lawsuit, all one long leet-day !

Forgive me this digression—that I stand  
Entranced awhile at Law's first beam, outbreak  
O' the business, when the Count's good angel bade 1170  
" Put up thy sword, born enemy to the ear,  
" And let Law listen to thy difference !"  
And Law does listen and compose the strife,  
Settle the suit, how wisely and how well !  
On our Pompilia, faultless to a fault, 1175  
Law bends a brow maternally severe,  
Implies the worth of perfect chastity,  
By fancying the flaw she cannot find.  
Superfluous sifting snow, nor helps nor harms :  
'T is safe to censure levity in youth, 1180  
Tax womanhood with indiscretion, sure !  
Since toys, permissible to-day, become  
Follies to-morrow : prattle shocks in church :  
And that curt skirt which lets a maiden skip,

The matron changes for a trailing robe. 1185  
 Mothers may risk thus much with half-shut eyes  
 Nodding above their spindles by the fire,  
 On the chance to hit some hidden fault, else safe.  
 Just so, Law hazarded a punishment—  
 If applicable to the circumstance, 1190  
 Why, well—if not so apposite, well too.  
 “Quit the gay range o’ the world,” I hear her cry,  
 “Enter, in lieu, the penitential pound :  
 “Exchange the gauds of pomp for ashes, dust :—  
 “Leave each mollitious haunt of luxury, 1195  
 “The golden-garnished silken-couched alcove,  
 “The many-columned terrace that so tempts  
 “Feminine soul put foot forth, nor stop-ear  
 “To fluttering joy of lover’s serenade,  
 “Leave these for cellular seclusion ; mask 1200  
 “And dance no more, but fast and pray ; avaunt—  
 “Be burned, thy wicked townsman’s sonnet-book !  
 “Welcome, mild hymnal by . . . some better scribe !  
 “For the warm arms, were wont enfold thy flesh,  
 “Let wire-shirt plough and whip-cord discipline ” 1205  
 If such an exhortation proved, perchance,

Inapplicâble, words bestowed in waste,  
What harm, since law has store, can spend nor miss ?

And so, our paragon submits herself,  
Goes at command into the holy house 1210  
And, also at command, comes out again :  
For, could the effect of such obedience prove  
Too certain, too immediate? Being healed,  
Go blaze abroad the matter, blessed one !  
Art thou sound forthwith? Speedily vacate 1215  
The step by pool-side, leave Bethesda free  
To patients plentifully posted round,  
Since the whole need not the physician ! Brief,  
She may betake her to her parents' place.  
Welcome her, father, with wide arms once more, 1220  
Motion her, mother, to thy breast again !  
For why? The law relinquishes its charge,  
Grants to your dwelling-place a prison's style,  
But gives you back Pompilia ; golden days,  
*Redeunt Saturnia regna !* Six weeks slip, 1225  
And she is domiciled in house and home  
As though she thence had never budged at all.

And thither let the husband, joyous—ay,  
 But contrite also—quick betake himself,  
 Proud that his dove which lay among the pots 1230  
 Hath mued those dingy feathers,—moulted now,  
 Shows silver bosom clothed with yellow gold.  
 Quick, he shall tempt her to the perch she fled,  
 Bid to domestic bliss the truant back !

O let him not delay ! Time fleets how fast, 1235  
 And opportunity, the irrevocable,  
 Once flown will flout him ! Is the furrow traced ?  
 If field with corn ye fail preoccupy,  
 Darnel for wheat and thistle-beards for grain,  
*Infelix lolium, carduus horridus,* 1240  
 Will grow apace in combination prompt,  
 Defraud the husbandman of his desire.  
 Already—hist—what murmurs 'monish now  
 The laggard ?—doubtful, nay, fantastic bruit  
 Of such an apparition, such return 1245  
*Interdum,* to anticipate the spouse,  
 Of Caponsacchi's very self ! 'T is said  
 When nights are lone and company is rare,

His visitations brighten winter up.  
If so they did—which nowise I believe— 1250  
How can I?—proof abounding that the priest,  
Once fairly at his relegation-place  
Never once left it—still, admit he stole  
A midnight march, would fain see friend again,  
Find matter for instruction in the past, 1255  
Renew the old adventure in such chat  
As cheers a fireside ! He was lonely too,  
He, too, must need his recreative hour.  
Should it amaze the philosophic mind  
If one, was wont the empurpled cup to quaff, 1260  
Have feminine society at will,  
Being debarred abruptly from all drink  
Save at the spring which Adam used for wine,  
Dread harm to just the health he hoped to guard,  
And, meaning abstinence, gain malady ? 1265  
Ask Tozzi, now physician to the Pope !  
“ Little by little break ”—(I hear he bids  
Master Arcangeli my antagonist,  
Who loves good cheer—and may indulge too much—  
So I explain the logic of the plea 1270



Wherewith he opened our proceedings late)—

“ Little by little break a habit, Don !

“ Become necessity to feeble flesh ! ”

And thus, nocturnal taste of intercourse

(Which never happened,—but, suppose it did) 1275

May have been used to dishabituate

By sip and sip this drainer to the dregs

O’ the draught of conversation,—heady stuff,

Brewage which broached, it took two days and  
nights

To properly discuss o’ the journey, Sirs ! 1280

Such is the second-nature, men call use,

That undelightful objects get to charm

Instead of chafe : the daily colocynth

Tickles the palate by repeated dose,

Old sores scratch kindly, the ass makes a push, 1285

Although the mill-yoke-wound be smarting yet,

For mill-door bolted on a holiday—

And must we marvel if the impulse urge

To talk the old story over now and then,

The hopes and fears, the stoppage and the haste,— 1290

Subjects of colloquy to surfeit once ?

" Here did you bid me twine a rosy wreath ! "

" And there you paid my lips a compliment ! "

" There you admired the tower could be so tall ! "

" And there you likened that of Lebanon 1295

" To the nose o' the beloved ! "—Trifles—still,

" *Forsan et hæc olim*,"—such trifles serve

To make the minutes pass in winter-time.

Husband, return then, I re-counsel thee !

For, finally, of all glad circumstance 1300

Should make a prompt return imperative,

What i' the world awaits thee, dost suppose ?

O' the sudden, as good gifts are wont befall,

What is the hap of the unconscious Count ?

That which lights bonfire and sets cask a-tilt, 1305

Dissolves the stubborn'st heart in jollity.

O admirable, there is born a babe,

A son, an heir, a Franceschini last

And best o' the stock ! Pompilia, thine the palm !

Repaying incredulity with faith, 1310

Ungenerous thrift of each marital debt

With bounty in profuse expenditure,

Pompilia will not have the old year end  
 Without a present shall ring in the new—  
 Bestows upon her parsimonious lord 1315  
 An infant for the apple of his eye,  
 Core of his heart, and crown completing life,  
 The *summum bonum* of the earthly lot !  
 " We," saith ingeniously the sage, " are born  
 " Solely that others may be born of us." 1320  
 So, father, take thy child, for thine that child,  
 Oh nothing doubt ! In wedlock born, law holds  
 Baseness impossible, since "*filius est*  
*Quem nuptiæ demonstrant*," twits the text 1325  
 Whoever dares to doubt.

Yet doubt he dares !

O faith where art thou flown from out the world ?  
 Already on what an age of doubt we fall !  
 Instead of each disputing for the prize,  
 The babe is bandied here from that to this. 1330  
 Whose the babe ? "*Cujum pecus ?*" Guido's lamb ?  
 "*An Melibæi ?*" Nay, but of the priest !  
 "*Non sed Ægonis !*" Someone must be sire :

And who shall say, in such a puzzling strait,  
If there were not vouchsafed some miracle 1335  
To the wife who had been harassed and abused  
More than enough by Guido's family  
For non-production of the promised fruit  
Of marriage? What if Nature, I demand,  
Touched to the quick by taunts upon her sloth, 1340  
Had roused herself, put forth recondite power,  
Bestowed this birth to vindicate her sway?  
Like to the favour, Maro memorized,  
Was granted Aristæus when his hive  
Lay empty of the swarm, not one more bee— 1345  
Not one more babe to Franceschini's house—  
And lo, a new birth filled the air with joy,  
Sprung from the bowels of the generous steed!  
Just so a son and heir rejoiced the Count!  
Spontaneous generation, need I prove 1350  
Were facile feat to Nature at a pinch?  
Let whoso doubts, steep horsehair certain weeks,  
In water, there will be produced a snake;  
A second product of the horse, which horse  
Happens to be the representative— 1355

Now ~~that~~ I think on 't—of Arezzo's self  
 The very city our conception blessed !  
 Is not a prancing horse the City-arms ?  
 What sane eye sees not such coincidence ?  
*Cur ego*, boast thou, my Pompilia, then, 1360  
*Desperem fieri sine conjuge*  
*Mater*—how well the Ovidian distich suits !—  
*Et parere intacto dummodo*  
*Casta viro* ? but language baffles here.  
 Note, further, as to mark the prodigy, 1365  
 The babe in question neither took the name  
 Of Guido, from the sire presumptive, nor  
 Giuseppe, from the sire potential, but  
 Gaetano—last saint of the hierarchy,  
 And newest namer for a thing so new : 1370  
 What other motive could have prompted choicè ?

Therefore be peace again : exult, ye hills !  
 Ye vales rejoicingly break forth in song !  
*Incipe, parve puer*, begin, small boy,  
*Risu cognoscere patrem*, with a smile 1375  
 To recognize thy parent ! Nor do thou

Boggle, oh parent, to return the grace—

*Nec anceps hære, pater, puero*

*Cognoscendo*—one might well eke out the prayer !

In vain ! The perverse Guido doubts his eyes, 1380

Distrusts assurance, lets the devil drive ;

Because his house is swept and garnished now,

He, having summoned seven like himself,

Must hurry thither, knock and enter in,

And make the last worse than the first, indeed ! 1385

Is he content ? We are. No further blame

O' the man and murder ! They were stigmatized

Befittingly : the Court heard long ago

My mind o' the matter, which, outpouring full,

Has long since swept, like surge i' the simile 1390

Of Homer, overborne both dyke and dam,

And whelmed alike client and advocate :

His fate is sealed, his life as good as gone,

On him I am not tempted to waste word.

Yet though my purpose holds,—which was and is 1395

And solely shall be to the very end,

To draw the true *effigiem* of a saint,

Do justice to perfection in the sex,—

Yet, let not some gross pamperer o' the flesh  
 And niggard in the spirit's nourishment, 1400  
 Whose feeding hath offuscated his wit  
 Rather than law,—he never had, to lose—  
 Let not such advocate object to me  
 I leave my proper function of attack !  
 “ What 's this to Bacchus ? ”—(in the classic phrase,  
 Well used, for once) he hiccups probably. 1406  
 O Advocate o' the Poor, thou born to make  
 Their blessing void—*beati pauperes* !  
 By painting saintship I depicture sin,  
 Beside the pearl, I prove how black the jet, 1410  
 And through Pompilia's virtue, Guido's crime.

Back to her, then,—with but one beauty more,  
 End we our argument,—one crowning grace  
 Pre-eminent 'mid agony and death.  
 For to the last Pompilia played her part, 1415  
 Used the right means to the permissible end,  
 And, wily as an eel that stirs the mud  
 Thick overhead, so baffling spearman's thrust,  
 She, while he stabbed her, simulated death,

Delayed, for his sake, the catastrophe, 1420  
Obtained herself a respite, four days' grace,  
Whereby she told her story to the world,  
Enabled me to make the present speech,  
And, by a full confession, saved her soul.

Yet hold, even here would malice leer its last, 1425  
Gurgle its choaked remonstrance : snake, hiss free !  
Oh, that 's the objection ? And to whom ?—not her  
But me, forsooth—as, in the very act  
Of both confession and, what followed close,  
Subsequent talk, chatter and gossipry, 1430  
Babble to sympathizing he and she  
Whoever chose besiege her dying bed,—  
As this were found at variance with my tale,  
Falsified all I have adduced for truth,  
Admitted not one peccadillo here, 1435  
Pretended to perfection, first and last,  
O' the whole procedure—perfect in the end,  
Perfect i' the means, perfect in everything,  
Leaving a lawyer nothing to excuse,  
Reason away and show his skill about ! 1440



—A flight, impossible to Adamic flesh,  
 Just to be fancied, scarcely to be wished,  
 And, anyhow, unpleadable in court !  
 “ How reconcile ” gasps Malice “ that with this ? ”

Your “ this,” friend, is extraneous to the law, 1445  
 Comes of men’s outside meddling, the unskilled  
 Interposition of such fools as press  
 Out of their province. Must I speak my mind ?  
 Far better had Pompilia died o’ the spot  
 Than found a tongue to wag and shame the law, 1450  
 Shame most of all herself,—did friendship fail;  
 And advocacy lie less on the alert.  
 Listen how these protect her to the end !  
 Do I credit the alleged narration ? No !  
 Lied our Pompilia then, to laud herself ? 1455  
 Still, no ;—clear up what seems discrepancy ?  
 The means abound,—art ’s long, though time is short,  
 So, keeping me in compass, all I urge  
 Is—since, confession at the point of death,  
*Nam in articulo mortis*, with the Church 1460  
 Passes for statement honest and sincere,

*Nemo presumitur reus esse*,—then,  
If sure that all affirmed would be believed,  
'T was charity, in one so circumstanced,  
To spend her last breath in one effort more 1465  
For universal good of friend and foe,  
And,—by pretending utter innocence,  
Nay, freedom from each foible we forgive,—  
Re-integrate—not solely her own fame,  
But do the like kind office for the priest 1470  
Whom the crude truth might treat less courteously,  
Indeed, expose to peril, abbreviate  
The life and long career of usefulness  
Presumably before him : while her lord,  
Whose fleeting life is forfeit to the law,— 1475  
What mercy to the culprit if, by just  
The gift of such a full certificate  
Of his immitigable guiltiness,  
She stifled in him the absurd conceit  
Of murder as it were a mere revenge ! 1480  
—Stopped confirmation of that jealousy  
Which, had she but acknowledged the first flaw,  
The faintest foible, might embolden him

To battle with his judge, baulk penitence,  
 Bar preparation for impending fate. 1485  
 Whereas, persuade him he has slain a saint  
 Who sinned not in the little she did sin,  
 You urge him all the brisklier to repent  
 Of most and least and aught and everything !  
 Next,—if this view of mine, content ye not, 1490  
 Lords, nor excuse the genial falsehood here,  
 'T is come to our *Triarii*, last resource,  
 We fall back on the inexpugnable,  
 Submit you,—she confessed before she talked !  
 The sacrament obliterates the sin : 1495  
 What is not,—was not, in a certain sense.  
 Let Molinists distinguish, “Souls washed white  
 “Were red once, still show pinkish to the eye !”  
 We say, abolishment is nothingness  
 And nothingness has neither head nor tail 1500  
 End nor beginning ;—better estimate  
 Exorbitantly, than disparage aught  
 Of the efficacy of the act, I hope !

*Solvuntur tabulae ?* May we laugh and go ?

Well,—not before (in filial gratitude 1505

To Law, who, mighty mother, waves adieu)

We take on us to vindicate Law's self—

For,—yea, Sirs,—curb the start, curtail the stare !—

Remains that we apologize for haste

I' the Law, our lady who here bristles up 1510

“ And my procedure? Did the Court mistake?

“ (Which were indeed a misery to think)

“ Did not my sentence in the former stage

“ O' the business bear a title plain enough?

“ *Decretum*”—I translate it word for word— 1515

“ ‘ Decreed : the priest, for his complicity

“ ‘ I' the flight and deviation of the dame,

“ ‘ As well as for unlawful intercourse,

“ ‘ Is banished three years :’ crime and penalty,

“ Declared alike. If he be taxed with guilt 1520

“ How can you call Pompilia innocent?

“ If they be innocent, have I been just?”

Gently, O mother, judge men !—whose mistake

Is in the poor misapprehensiveness.

The *Titulus* a-top of your decree 1525

Was but to ticket there the kind of charge  
You in good time would arbitrate upon.  
Title is one thing,—arbitration's self,  
*Probatio*, quite another possibly.  
*Subsistit*, there holds good the old response, 1530  
*Responsio tradita*, we must not stick,  
*Quod non sit attendendus Titulus*,  
To the Title, *sed Probatio*, but to Proof,  
*Resultans ex processu*, and result  
O' the Trial, and the style of punishment, 1535  
*Et pœna per sententiam imposita*;  
All is tentative, till the sentence come,  
Mere indication of what men expect,  
And nowise an assurance they shall find.  
Lords, what if we permissibly relax 1540  
The tense bow, as the law-god Phœbus bids,  
Relieve our gravity at close of speech?  
I traverse Rome, feel thirsty, need a draught,  
Look for a wine-shop, find it by the bough  
Projecting as to say "Here wine is sold!" 1545  
So much I know,—"sold:" but what sort of wine?  
Strong, weak, sweet, sour, home-made or foreign drink?

That much must I discover by myself.

"Wine is sold," quoth the bough, "but good or  
bad,

"Find, and inform us when you smack your lips!" 1550

Exactly so, Law hangs her title forth,

To show she entertains you with such case

About such crime: come in! she pours, you quaff.

You find the Priest good liquor in the main,

But heady and provocative of brawls. 1555

Remand the residue to flask once more,

Lay it low where it may deposit lees,

I' the cellar: thence produce it presently,

Three years the brighter and the better!

Thus, 1560

Law's son, have I bestowed my filial help,

And thus I end, *tenax proposito*;

Point to point as I purposed have I drawn

Pompilia, and implied as terribly

Guido: so, gazing, let the world crown Law— 1565

Able once more, despite my impotence,

And helped by the acumen of the Court,

To eliminate, display, make triumph truth !  
What other prize than truth were worth the pains ?

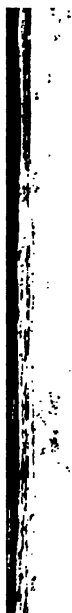
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There 's my oration—much exceeds in length      1570  
That famed Panegyric of Isocrates,  
They say it took him fifteen years to pen.  
But all those ancients could say anything !  
He put in just what rushed into his head,  
While I shall have to prune and pare and print.      1575  
This comes of being born in modern times  
With' priests for auditory. Still, it pays.

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